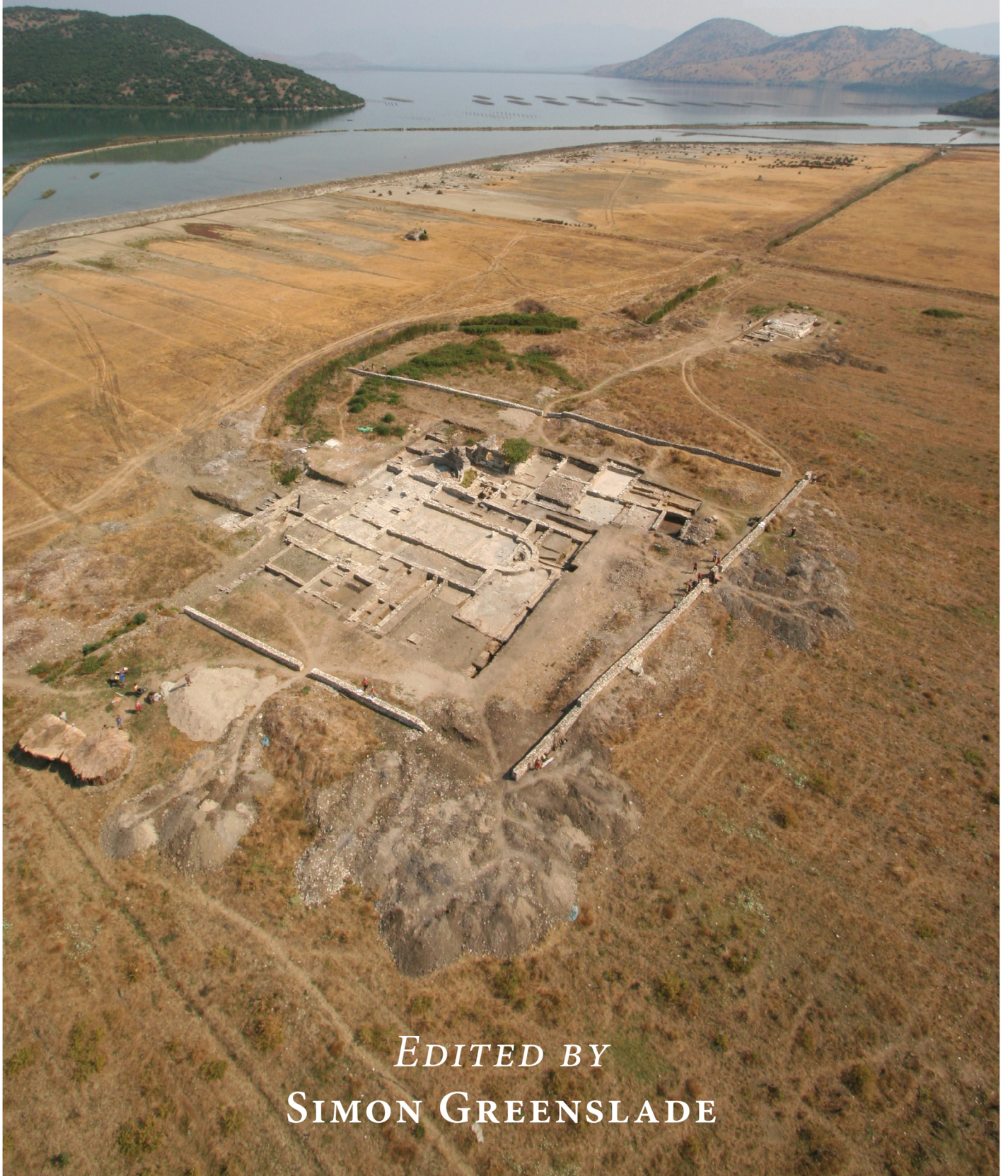


BUTRINT 6

EXCAVATIONS ON THE VRINA PLAIN VOLUME 1
THE LOST ROMAN AND BYZANTINE SUBURB



EDITED BY
SIMON GREENSLADE

BUTRINT 6

EXCAVATIONS ON THE VRINA PLAIN

Volume 1

THE LOST ROMAN AND BYZANTINE SUBURB

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Butrint Archaeological Monographs

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Front cover: View of the Vrina Plain excavations with Lake Butrint beyond (by Alket Islami)

Back cover: Details of various panels of the 6th-century mosaic pavement from the Vrina Plain basilica (by Sarah Leppard)

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Preface and acknowledgements

Simon Greenslade and Richard Hodges

Our microecological model answers, then, to the direction that some urban economic historiography has hesitantly taken. It encourages us to conceive towns less as separate and clearly definable entities and more as loci of contact or overlap between different ecologies. Towns are settings in which ecological processes may be intense, and in which the anthropogene effect is at its most pronounced. But they are not – or not simply by definition – more than that. And they should not be presented as conceptually detachable from the remainder of the spectrum of settlement types.

Horden and Purcell¹

Linking the contextual materiality of contemporary deposits with the contextual conditions of history should allow us to proceed towards an enhanced understanding of the strategies of historical production and thus towards things that we did not previously know.

Barrett²

The ‘ruralising’ of urban history by Horden and Purcell in their influential *The Corrupting Sea* has met a sharp response from ancient historians, many of whom would empathise with William Harris in arguing that this approach shrinks into insignificance the whole category of the town or city.³ Strangely, though, few archaeological projects around the Mediterranean have set out to resolve this issue of urbanism in context. Instead, the debate mostly centres upon poorly excavated and poorly dated archaeological evidence, as well as hypotheses constructed upon wafer-thin evidence. The Butrint Foundation’s project from 1994 to 2012 at ancient *Buthrotum* in south-west Albania offered an opportunity to test this concept of a town as one of a ‘spectrum of settlement types’.

The UNESCO World Heritage inscription of Butrint in 1992 took no account of the context of the Graeco-Roman town of *Buthrotum*. Nor, notwithstanding surveys of the Vrina Plain made by Dhimosten Budina in the 1960s, was there any understanding of an extra-mural settlement – a suburbium of sorts – on the south side of the Vivari

Channel. In their studies of Butrint, Luigi Maria Ugolini in the period 1928–36 and post-war Albanian archaeologists shared a paradigm of Butrint that simply accepted that the boundaries of the town were defined by its fortifications.⁴ It is easy to understand why these archaeologists reached this conclusion. Their world-views were shaped by an urban model that was, for a long time, shaped by resistance to external forces at odds with Albanian nationalism.⁵ Fortifications defined this resistance; beyond these lay a peasant world that was entirely different (and for the most part perceived as primitive). The UNESCO inscription in 1992, albeit an early index of Albania’s transition to democratic government, merely codified an earlier archaeological model.

Indeed, even after the first remote sensing showed the extent of settlement on the Vrina Plain, and the systematic recording of the archaeological remains in a long east–west drainage ditch confirmed this in July 2002, there was Albanian resistance to accepting its existence. In August 2002, Dhimetër Çondi published an article in the national newspaper, *Shekulli*, contending that the remains on the Vrina Plain were those of the celebrated (Republican) villa of Titus Pomponius Atticus. This villa is known to have existed in the environs of Butrint,⁶ so the attribution carried some weight, except that none of these remains, as this detailed report shows, is securely Republican Roman in date. Instead, the report here presented charts the making of an early Roman bridgehead community beside the Vivari Channel, aligned to the centuriation of the reclaimed lands to the east of Butrint. There followed several significant habitations, each different in form and importance to Butrint itself: first, a major 3rd-century villa or *domus* ranking with the largest of its kind in the province of Epirus Vetus, which in turn was transformed into a new residential centre dominated by a Christian basilica in Late Antiquity, which then in the 9th century, before the revival of Butrint as a walled urban centre in the later 10th century, became the home of an administrator, probably a Byzantine *archon* commanding the region, and was, in all but name, Butrint.



Figure 0.1. The road to Vrina looking towards Butrint 1961

With changing environmental conditions, much of the area became a wetland in the Later Byzantine period⁷ and for this reason remained beyond the gaze of the Italian Archaeological Mission led by Ugolini in the 1920s and 1930s. It was the building of a road to Butrint for Nikita Khrushchev's visit in May 1959,⁸ and with it in 1961, following the political shift by the Albanian government from a Soviet to a Chinese alliance, a road to the frontier village of Vrina that opened up Butrint not only to visitors but to modern farming methods (Fig. 0.1). Soon afterwards, during the 1960s, there followed the systematic drainage of the Vrina Plain, part of a programme of larger agricultural works in Albania, and its cultivation by a collective farm (Fig. 0.2). With these large-scale agrarian works the measure of the archaeology in this suburbium first began to become evident.⁹

These intricate excavations between 2002 and 2007 bear out John Barrett's dictum that patient excavation provides new light on historical production in numerous ways. Without doubt these excavations greatly enlarge the urban story of the Ionian port of Butrint, occasionally offering support for Horden and Purcell's 'spectrum' model and at other times support for Harris's refutation of it.

Acknowledgements

The carrying out of such patient excavations requires a large number of people to be thanked. First and foremost we are gratefully indebted to Lord Rothschild and Lord Sainsbury of Preston Candover, trustees of the Butrint Foundation, who with patience have supported the excavations throughout. A huge debt is also owed to the Packard Humanities Institute and especially its President, Dr. David Packard, who has been a very supportive partner in this project.

We are especially indebted to Sir Patrick Fairweather, formerly British ambassador to Albania (1992–96), and from 1997 to 2004, the Director of the Butrint Foundation. Thanks also to Daniel Renton, Director of the Foundation between 2004 and 2006 and to Rupert Smith, Director of the Foundation 2007 to 2008, who as well as visiting the excavations often during the seasons both spent a few days digging on them too; and to Brian Ayers, Director from 2008 to 2012.

Our thanks to Iris Pojani and Diana Ndrenika, successive Directors of the International Centre for Albanian Archaeology in Tirana. Thanks also to our Albanian colleagues: Lorenc Bejko, Neritan Ceka, Ylli Cerova, Dhimetër Çondi, Reshad Gega, Ilir Gjipali, Shpresa Gjongecaj, Gjerak Karaiskaj, Telemark Llakhana, Etleva Nallbani, Guri Pani and Artan Shkreli. Finally, we owe a special debt to the Director of the Institute of Archaeology during the course of these excavations, Professor Muzafer Korkuti.

Richard Hodges and Gjergj Saraçi served as co-directors of the Butrint Foundation project from 1994 to 1996; and Richard Hodges and Kosta Lako with Ilir Gjipali were co-directors from 1998 to 1999. Richard Hodges and Ilir Gjipali were co-directors from 2000 to 2009.

The six field seasons ran between June and July 2002 to 2007. Although the temperatures during these months were sometimes in the high 30s, this period was the best time to excavate as the water table was at its lowest, the water dropping over 1 m from the start of the season to the end.

Between 2002 and 2004 the drainage ditch excavations were managed by Ryan Ricciardi, assisted by Saimir Shpuza (2002), Andy Crowson (2003), Simon Greenslade (2002, 2004) and Sarah Leppard (2004). The 2005 to 2007 excavations of the basilica and *domus* were directed



Figure 0.2. View of the Vrina Plain from Butrint 1971

by Simon Greenslade and Sarah Leppard. In 2008, the exploratory excavations were carried out by Simon Greenslade who also oversaw part of the initial backfilling of the site by the workmen and women of Shën Dëlli.

Throughout the six seasons Oliver Gilkes oversaw the student training programme and excavations, ably assisted by a dedicated team of young Albanians: Sinderealla Golemi (2002–03), Nevila Molla (2004–06), Elda Omari (2006), Valbona Hysa (2006–07), Sinoida Martallozi (2006) and Gjerg Vinjahu (2006–07). Further support in supervising these student excavations was provided by Benen Hayden and Riley Thorne in 2004 and by Emily Glass and Matthew Logue in 2005.

Despite the extreme temperatures and the occasional torrential rainfalls and associated thunder and lightning, the excavations from the start were undertaken by an enthusiastic number of experienced archaeologists from a wide range of UK-based professional contract units, along with Italian and American university graduates, and members of the Albanian Heritage Foundation (Fig. 0.3). We are especially grateful to all these people, particularly Vincent Mougin, Grace Corbett, Riona McMorrow, Phil Jeffries, Matthew Logue, Pete Crawley, Dawn Gooney,

Elliot Heilman, Laura Morabito, Alessandro Sebastiani, Cath Ambrey, Esmeralde Agolli, Emily Glass, Nathan Chinchén, Andy Phelps, Pippa Lacey, Amy Culwick, Helen Robertson, Giulia Vollono, Elda Omari, Sinoida Martallozi, Valbona Hysa, Riley Thorne, Stuart Randall, Ilion Velagoshti, Michael Esposito, Reuben Thorpe, Efthymios Rizos, Klodiana Kondo, Polly Mitchell, Christina Tub and Mary Welsley.

Local workmen and women from the village of Shën Dëlli also assisted in the excavations. Although they were generally used for the removal of vegetation and topsoil, their hard work and hospitality throughout the seasons was greatly appreciated by everyone involved.

Site photography was by Sarah Leppard, Oliver Gilkes, Andy Crowson and Simon Greenslade, as well as by members supervising the student training programme. Kite photography was by Massimo Zanfini, who also did all the photogrammetry of the mosaics. Aerial views of the excavations were taken by Alket Islami. Views of the Vrina Plain from Mount Mile were by Brian Donovan.

All drawings on site were done by members of the various teams and digitised by Simon Greenslade, who created all the illustrative work from these. The reconstruction and cut-

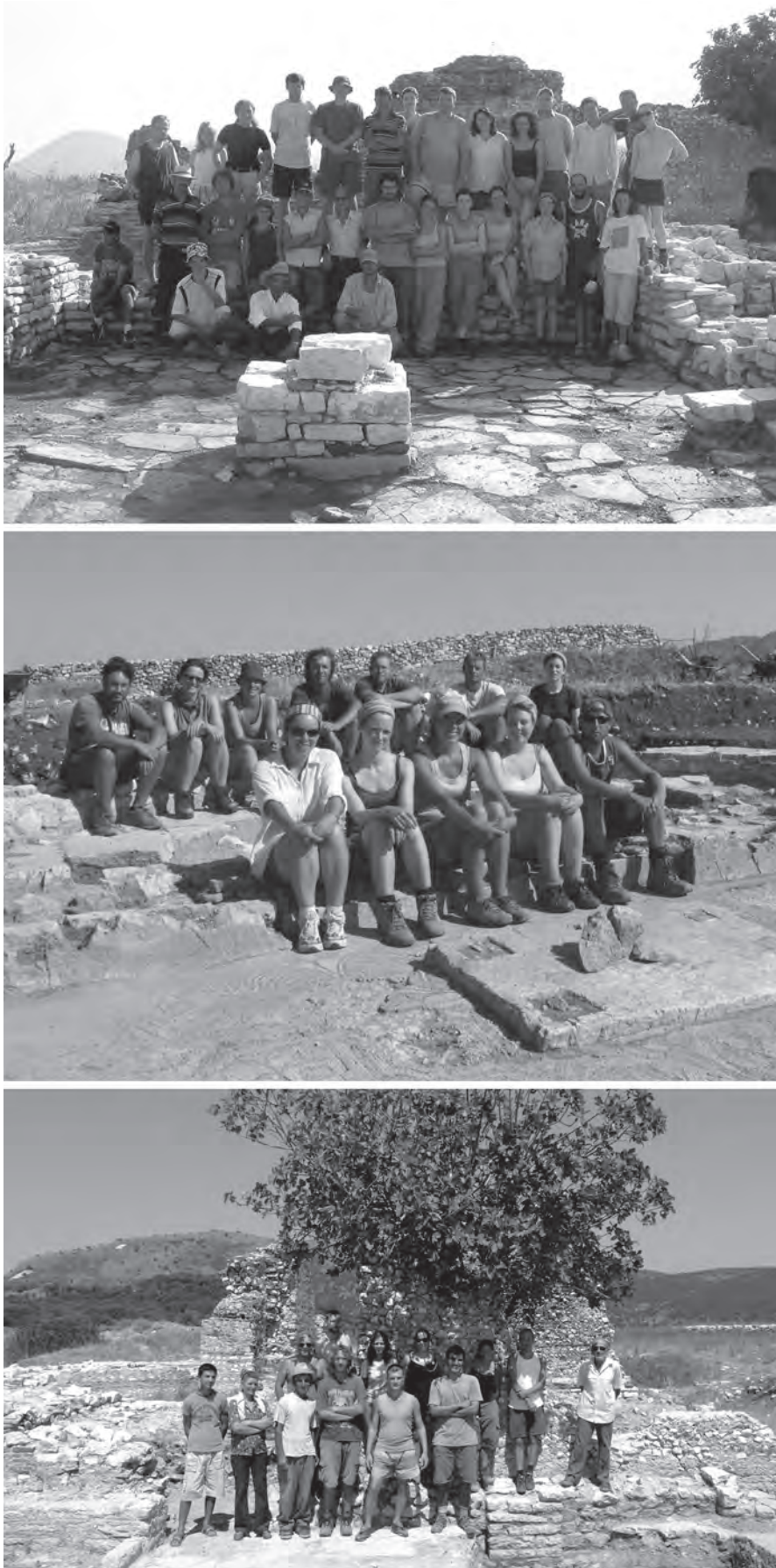


Figure 0.3. Members of the 2005, 2006 and 2007 Vrina Plain excavation teams

away images of the Vrina Plain *domus* and basilica, together with the Triconch *domus*, were produced by Sarah Leppard, who also assisted in the digitising of the original site plans. The nave mosaic was digitised by Simon Greenslade, while the sanctuary mosaic was digitised by Sarah Leppard. In completing this task a big thank you must be made to Massimo, for without his initial photogrammetrical image of the basilica mosaic creating the final plan of this complex pavement would have been very difficult.

The processing of the finds was managed by Dave Boschi and Inge Lyse Hansen, assisted by Sabina Veseli and Ilir Papa, while the conservation of the finds was organised by Pippa Pearce. Finds photography was carried out by James Barclay Brown, Michael Grayley, Martin Smith and Sarah Leppard, while finds illustration was done by Adelheid Heil and Julia Jarrett. A number of finds illustrations were done by Dave Boschi and digitised by Sarah Leppard, who also digitised a number of unfinished Adelheid Heil pencil drawings. The Roman pottery has been studied by Paul Reynolds and the medieval ceramics by Joanita Vroom. The mosaics were studied by John Mitchell who also studied the small finds. The Roman coins have been studied by Richard Abdy and Sam Moorhead, and the Byzantine and medieval coins by Pagona Papadopolou, who also studied the medieval lead seals. The late Sarah Jennings was responsible for the glass. Unfortunately this exceptional lady, who it was a privilege to know, never managed to finish her study due to her untimely death, but partly owing to her copious notes it has been possible for Karen Stark to produce a representative catalogue of the glassware from the Vrina Plain. As well as glassware, the Vrina Plain also produced a number of glass cakes, ingots of raw glass associated with glass working; these and a number of glass *tesserae* were studied by Nadine Schibille. The human remains were studied by Todd W. Fenton, Angela Soler, Carolyn V. Hurst, and Jared Beatrice, while Adrienne Powell managed all the faunal remains, assisted by Richard Madgwick who is owed a great deal of thanks for writing the finished faunal report. The marbles recovered from the Temple Mausoleum were studied by Inge Lyse Hansen. The archaeobotanical material has been studied by Alexandria Livarda, while the archaeomalacological (mollusc) data has been collated by Rena Veropoulidou and by Matthew Law and Richard Madgwick.

The copy editing of the three volumes was done by Catrina Appleby.

The Vrina Plain excavations are indebted to Dave Bescoby, who not only made the very first exploratory trenches in 2001, which gave tantalising glimpses of what was to come, but carried on supporting the excavations with all its surveying needs, without which the planning and recording of the site would have been almost impossible. Dave continued throughout the seasons to study the geomorphology of the plain and its seismic episodes and is responsible for working out the ancient shorelines which provide invaluable information for understanding the layout of the archaeological remains.

Any excavation needs a welcoming waterhole at the end of a heavy day in the blazing sun (or a torrential thunderstorm) and so it is to Tani Çeliku and his bar that a huge thank you must also be made in this roll of acknowledgments. Whatever the day brought he was always there with a smile, a cold beer, snacks, a chat and good music (always assuming you liked Heavy Metal (!)). A big thank you must also be extended to Tani's wonderful parents, Agim and Futuretta, whose amazing hospitality made us all feel like we were one of the family. Guzuar!

To all these must be added a number of other individuals who need not be named but almost certainly know who they are. Since 2012, getting this report to this point has been a massive and at times challenging undertaking but through their constant support this wonderful site has once again come alive, and hopefully this report does their belief in it justice.

From a few upstanding remains in an apparently flat agricultural landscape, no-one could have expected just how much the Vrina Plain excavations would expose of a history closely tied and at times overtaking that of the city across the Vivari Channel, and so to everyone who helped in revealing this story and to making this publication possible, a huge thank you is owed. To all these people this volume is dedicated.

Notes

- 1 Horden and Purcell 2000, 100–01.
- 2 Barrett 2006, 210.
- 3 Harris 2005, 29.
- 4 Cf. Hodges 2013.
- 5 Bowden and Hodges 2004.
- 6 Cf. Hansen 2009.
- 7 Bescoby 2013.
- 8 Hodges 2009.
- 9 Cf. Budina 1971.

1 The history of the Vrina Plain

Simon Greenslade

Location

The Vrina Plain lies to the south of the city of Butrint (Fig. 1.1). Bordered to the southwest by the Korafi hills and stretching to the southeast as far as the conical hill of Çuka e Ajtoit, close to the Greek border, this alluvial valley covers an area of approximately 20 km². Dotted across this seemingly flat plateau are a number of limestone outcrops upon which the modern-day settlements of Shën Dëlli, Xarra and Vrina are located. A further outcrop is that of Kalivo, bordering the southern margin of Lake Butrint (Fig. 1.2).

The Plain is separated from Butrint by the Vivari Channel which links Lake Butrint to the Straits of Corfu. This saltwater channel was originally the mouth of the River Bistrica, which ran into the north end of Lake Butrint.

Central to the plain is Lake Butrint, which covers an area of 1600 hectares. The quality of the water in the lake can be divided into two distinct layers. The upper layer (approximately 8 m in depth) is rich in oxygen and supports a diverse marine culture. The salinity of this layer changes seasonally from winter to summer. The lower layer (approximately 14 m in depth) lacks oxygen and is sulphurous. The lake is rich in fish species including mullet, eel, bream, wrasse, sardine and anchovies. Mussels are the predominant mollusc and have been farmed in the lake since 1968. The north and south shores of the lake today are flanked by saltwater marshes with associated amphibian, reptile and bird populations.

To the southeast of Lake Butrint is the much smaller Lake Bufi. This covers an area of 83 hectares and has an average depth of 1 m. Fed by freshwater springs, it originally drained into Lake Butrint but is now connected by a cut channel that allows water to flow either way between the lakes. As a result, saline water from Lake Butrint has increased the salinity of Lake Bufi.¹

The pastoral aspect of the low-lying area visible today is largely a result of the implementation of a state-run collective agricultural policy by the communist government of the 1960s and 1970s, based on a model developed by

the Chinese, their ideological allies at the time. With the institution of state farms at the villages of Xarra and Vrina, woodland which had covered much of the plain was removed and a grid of large irrigation channels was dug across the plain in order to drain the marshy area, thereby creating a usable space for crops and animal grazing.

The formation of the Vrina Plain

Like many coastal locations within the Mediterranean Basin, the Vrina Plain is a dynamic and continually evolving landscape, created by a complex interaction of natural and human processes over the last 15,000 years. Changes in sea level and the climate as well as tectonic movements have all had a pronounced effect on the plain's evolution (Fig. 1.3). Even today the scale of this can be seen with regard to the modern coastline which is now over 2 km west of the once-fabled port city of Butrint, with seaward access via the Vivari Channel.

Sedimentary analysis of core samples taken across the area would seem to indicate that the entire plain, together with Lake Butrint and Lake Bufi, once formed part of a large coastal bay of the Ionian Sea stretching potentially as far as Phoenice to the north and Mursia to the southeast.² From around 5200 BP the bay appears to have begun to silt up with alluvial material brought down by the Pavllas and Bistrica rivers, the two main rivers of the area. This created a mixture of marsh and wetland habitats interspersed with small islands separated by narrow channels. These changes seem to have been accelerated by changes to the environment connected with the opening up of the Holocene vegetation, beginning about 6600 BP and becoming much more pronounced after about 4000 BP.

By 2700 BP the sediment input appears to have increased and the development of the plain was dominated by the growth of large deltas to the seaward side of Butrint, resulting in the formation of a stable alluvial floodplain with well-drained soils suitable for agrarian settlement. There are likely to have existed at least two major channels running



Figure 1.1. The Vrina Plain looking south from the acropolis of Butrint city

along the axis of the valley, depositing sediment into the bay from an extensive inland catchment. Smaller channels relating to more local catchments would also have formed, one draining the now lagoonal Lake Buŋi, and another, located to the east of present day settlement of Shën Dëlli, draining from the high ground east of Xarra. These would have contributed to marshy deltaic formations extending northeastwards towards the city of Butrint. By this stage the original bay was separated from the coast by a narrow channel, which may have had important consequences for the operation of a port at Butrint.

With the water table dropping, land on the south side of the channel became elevated above the waterline, and except after thunderstorms or prolonged winter rain, must have been exposed and covered in vegetation. From the middle of the 1st century AD, continued silting resulted in a number of topographical high points with sufficiently well-drained alluvial soils to allow for the expansion of a suburban settlement beyond the confines of the earlier city. Channels, by now much reduced in size, are likely to have been relatively stable, with a sediment load dominated by fine silts forming cohesive banks fixed with vegetation. Strabo (VII.324.446), the 1st-century geographer, associates Butrint's harbour with *Pelodes Limen* or muddy harbour. Whether he had actually visited the town is doubtful; more probably he had heard from merchants or travellers who recalled disdainfully the murky waters in the Vivari Channel. Even today heavy storms wash down soil from the surrounding hills which darkens not only the rivers but also Lake Butrint, leaving great muddy fans exuding from the mouths of the channels into the Straits of Corfu, a situation Gerald Durrell clearly describes in *My Family and Other Animals*.³

Throughout this time the Vrina Plain was constantly evolving. The establishment of the Roman colony is likely to have brought about extensive regional landscape modifications. Centuriation along the valley would have been an integral part of the colonial landscape remodelling and drainage schemes may also have been implemented. Sedimentary deposition continued during the Roman period as catchment modifications, including channel straightening, deforestation and urbanisation, will have affected the rivers' sediment loads and increased the potential for flooding. Field investigations upon the plain have identified Roman Republican layers buried beneath up to 1.20 m of alluvium.⁴ Archaeometric evidence suggests that channel silting increased around AD 450–500, possibly linked to changes in Roman agricultural practice and associated sea-level rises. This in turn led to the submergence of the Roman levels.⁵

The changes continued into the medieval period, with renewed inundation of former wetlands possibly increasing the size of the large delta around the mouth of the sea inlet. This may relate to the medieval revival of Butrint and the renewed utilization of the alluvial plain, especially along the levee banks of the main channels flowing down the valley, offering well-drained fertile soils.

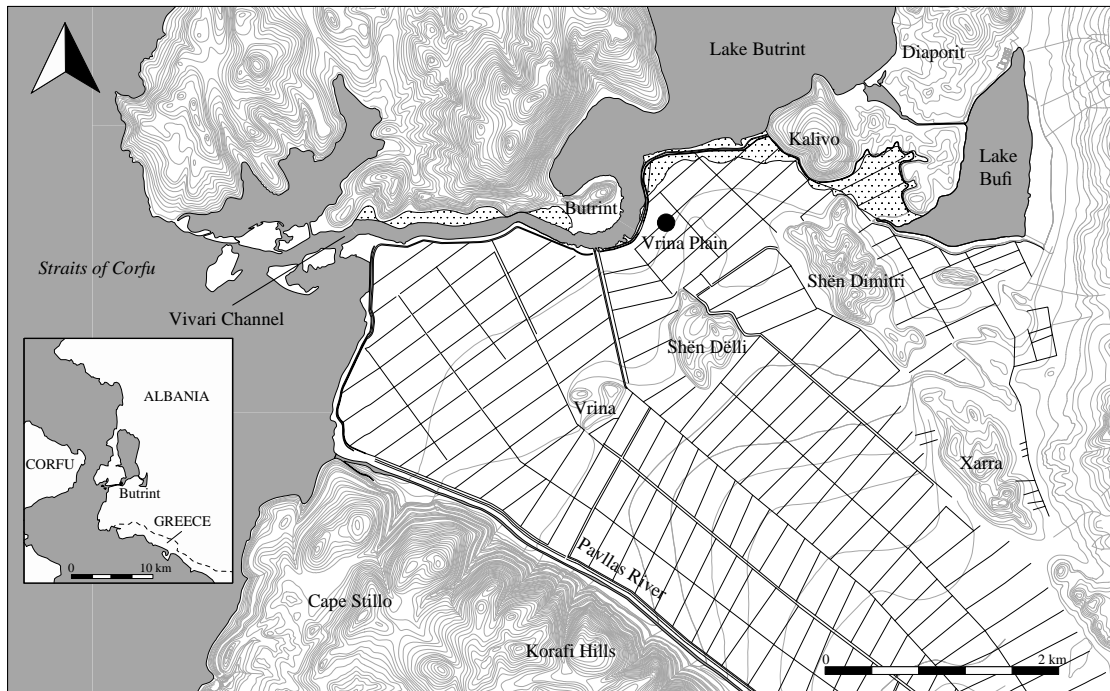


Figure 1.2. Location map showing the Vrina Plain



1000 BC



1st century AD



15th century



20th century

Figure 1.3. The development of the Vrina Plain

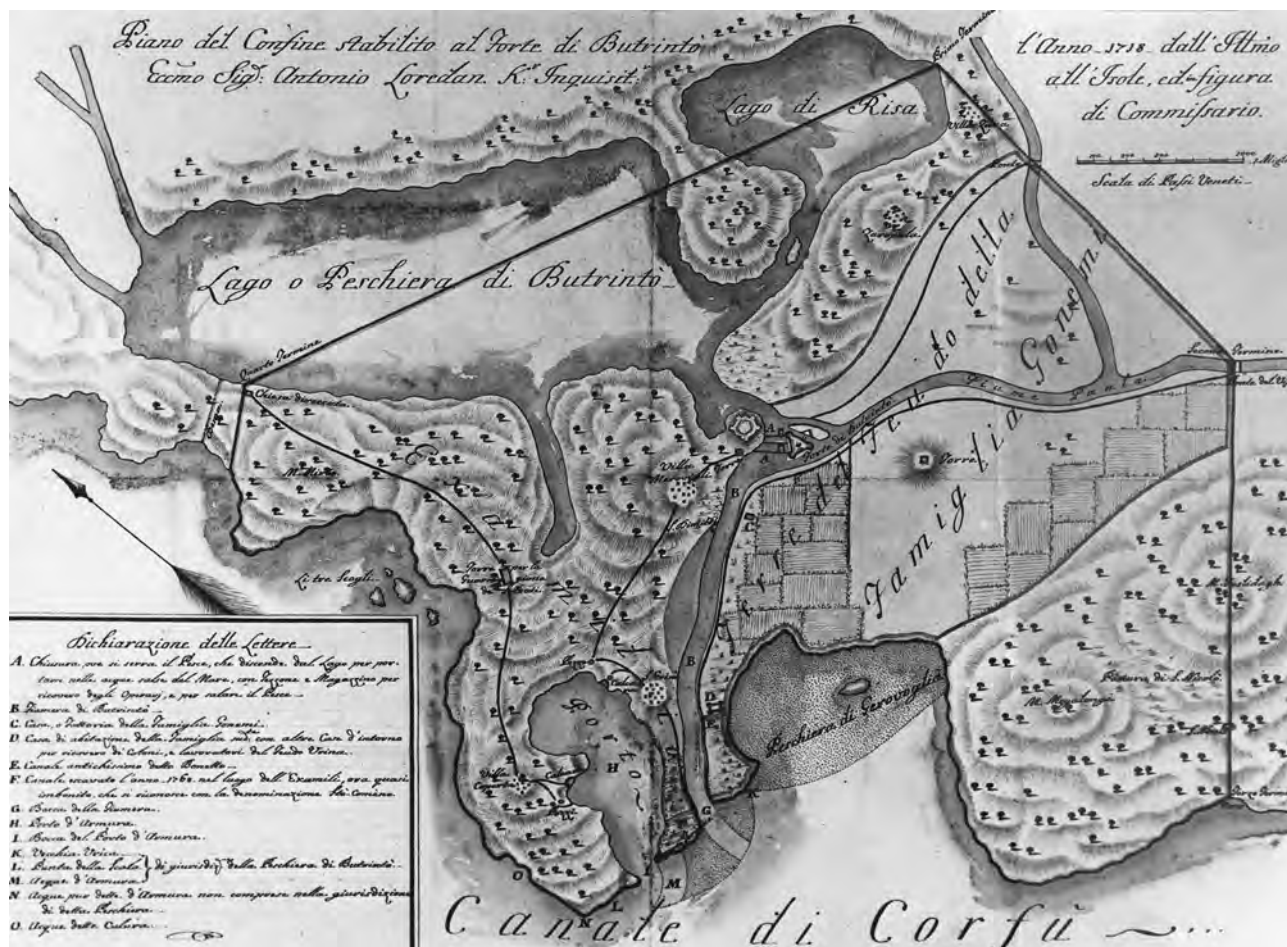


Figure 1.4. Cadastral Map of 1718 (Museo della Civiltà Romana, Rome)

It would appear that by the 18th century the plain had predominately reverted to a wetland marsh environment, which may reflect a relative rise in sea level, again as a result of subsidence in the area.

The earliest detailed map of the Vrina Plain, a 1718 Venetian Cadastral map, records it as an area of low hills with beyond it, towards Kalivo, *paludo* – marshland (Fig. 1.4). In 1818 the British, Austrian and Neapolitan governments undertook a combined venture to survey the Albanian coastline under the command of Capt. W. H. Smyth. Published in 1825, Smyth's map for the Admiralty, *Chart of the Channels of Corfu with the Adjacent Coast of Albania*, clearly depicts the Vrina Plain as having the same topography as that of the 1718 map. In the following year, the *Carte physique historique de la Grèce* by the French Lt. General Comte Guillemoinot was published with an inset map of Butrint.⁶ The French never undertook a comprehensive survey of southern Albania but based the map partially on the observations of French Grand Tourists who had visited the site and partly on military data collected during the short-lived French occupation of the Ionian islands in the late 18th century. Again the map depicts the area directly opposite the city of Butrint as a marsh.

Smyth's charts were updated in 1840 when Butrint Bay was fully sounded,⁷ and again in 1863 when Commander A.

L. Mansell and HMS *Firefly* undertook an extensive new survey of the area, despatching surveying parties inland to create the first true topographic survey of Butrint and its immediate environs.⁸ On this survey, published in 1865, the Tchiflik Plain, as it was named, was again depicted with the same topography seen on the earlier maps. A hydrographic survey of the same period by Mansell does, however, note tall reeds and swamp in the area where part of the Roman town has been found recently.⁹

These first efforts at mapping are confirmed in a number of descriptive accounts by visitors who were in the area at the time, principally W. M. Leake and Francois Pouqueville, the rival British and French diplomats at the court of Ali Pasha of Tepelena, who both visited Butrint in 1805. Describing his arrival at Butrint by boat Leake wrote:

As we approach Vutzindro (Butrint), the water becomes muddy, and in the bay is almost fresh. This bay is very shallow on the northern side, and the bar at the mouth of the river will even now, when the water is still at the highest, but just admit of the entrance of kaiki, or small coasting vessels. We row three maybe four miles up the river, through a plain once perhaps the property of Atticus, a friend of Cicero, and now peopled with horses from the neighbouring village.¹⁰



Figure 1.5. Sketch by Edward Lear made on the Korafi Hills looking northwards towards Butrint and the Vrina Plain (Private Collection)



Figure 1.6. The Vrina Plain as seen from Mount Sotira, 1920s (Instituti i Arkeologjisë, Tirana)

Pouqueville on the other hand was a bit more damning in his view of the uncomfortable conditions he found:

The air of these lakes, and consequently of Butrinto, is now as pestilential as that of the famous Pontine marshes of Italy. The effects of this air are dreaded even across the sea in Corfu...¹¹

In 1857, Edward Lear visited Butrint a number of times whilst living in Corfu, sketching the plain from two angles: the Korafi Hills (Fig. 1.5), and from Mount Sotira looking down over Butrint to the Vrina Plain beyond. In both cases he depicts the plain as essentially featureless with low hills.¹²

The area was essentially unaltered in the 1920s when Luigi Ugolini began his excavations at Butrint (Fig. 1.6). Ugolini found the plain densely wooded and marshy in parts, and although he noted the presence of a number of extant Roman ruins, no attempt was made to clear or record them in detail. This topography is also confirmed by the Royal Air Force photographs taken in November 1943 (Fig. 1.7), as well as by the childhood memories of Gerald Durrell who describes his hunting expeditions on the plain, along with the marshes between the Triangular Castle and Butrint Bay, in *My Family and Other Animals*.¹³

In recent decades the biggest impact on the plain has been the implementation of a state-run collective agricultural

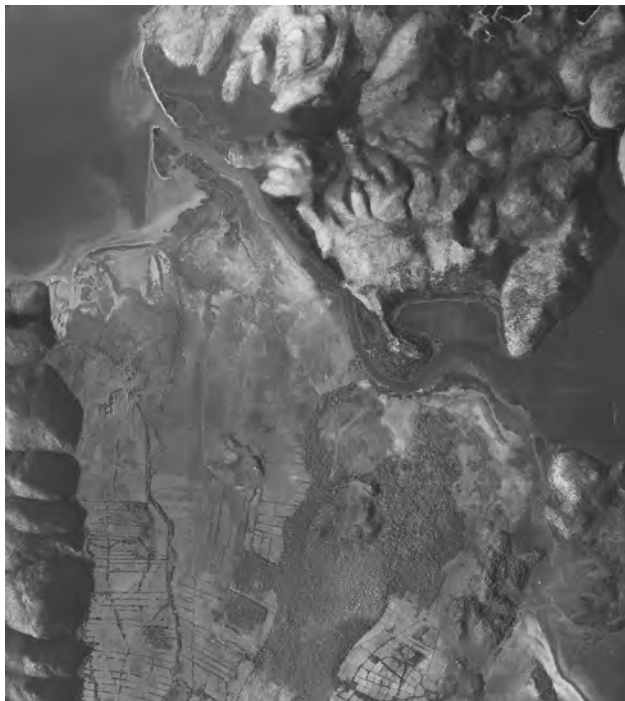


Figure 1.7. Aerial view of the Vrina Plain, 1940s (Crown copyright 1943/MOD)

policy by the communist government of the 1960s and 1970s, based on a model developed by the Chinese. Following the creation of state farms at the villages of Xarra and Vrina, the plain, along with the area north of Lake Butrint, was cleared of vegetation, the streams and creeks canalised and the area systematically levelled using heavy earthmoving machinery and bulldozers. Low stepped ridges of earth just to the south of the present-day excavations show where the bulldozers actually halted before the masonry remains. Where possible standing structures were left undisturbed, although in some cases these were smashed or moved: for example, some piers of the aqueduct near the village of Xarra were shifted several metres from their original positions. The flattened area was then drained by a series of deep linear channels, some of which were up to 2 m deep, that form a grid across the plain. The resulting spoil from these operations seems to have been removed and used to create the dykes that were constructed as part of the programme along the edge of Lake Butrint. To control the flow of water in the ditches a pumping station was built which still survives just west of the Triangular Castle. The area was then worked by a collective farm from Shën Dëlli, with maize being the principal crop.

Since 1991, when the state collective farms ceased operating and the network of drainage ditches was no longer maintained, the plain has changed once more. Increasingly the landscape is returning to its previous condition, as it was in medieval, Venetian, and Ottoman periods (Fig. 1.8).

Background to the excavations

The first scientific exploration of the classical Greek and Roman remains in the environs of Butrint was undertaken



Figure 1.8. View of the Vrina Plain today from Mount Mile (photo Brian Donovan)

by the Italian inter-war archaeological mission to Albania led by Luigi Maria Ugolini.¹⁴ This mission noted the presence of a number of extant Roman ruins on the plain but because of the dense woodland and marshy conditions made no attempt to clear or record them in any detail.¹⁵ Subsequent research in the 1960s and the 1990s by the Albanian Institute of Archaeology was largely restricted to a number of investigations focused around the standing remains, including a slot dug across the interior of the apsidal building, some surface survey and small-scale excavation trenches, and the recording of finds made during further land improvement.¹⁶

Following the collapse of the communist government, at the invitation of the Albanian Institute of Archaeology, the Butrint Foundation has conducted an intensive field survey on the south side of the Vivari Channel, covering the area between the Korafi Hills in the west, Xarra in the south and Kalivo in the east, to help place the city of Butrint in the context of its contemporary hinterland.¹⁷

Initially, an environmental survey of the area was carried out, in which 22 cores were taken along the distal limits of the plain close to the Vivari Channel so as to gain a preliminary understanding of the sedimentary sequence and stratigraphic development of the plain.¹⁸ These hand-augured borings reached a maximum depth of 7 m and although they did not reach bedrock, revealed a

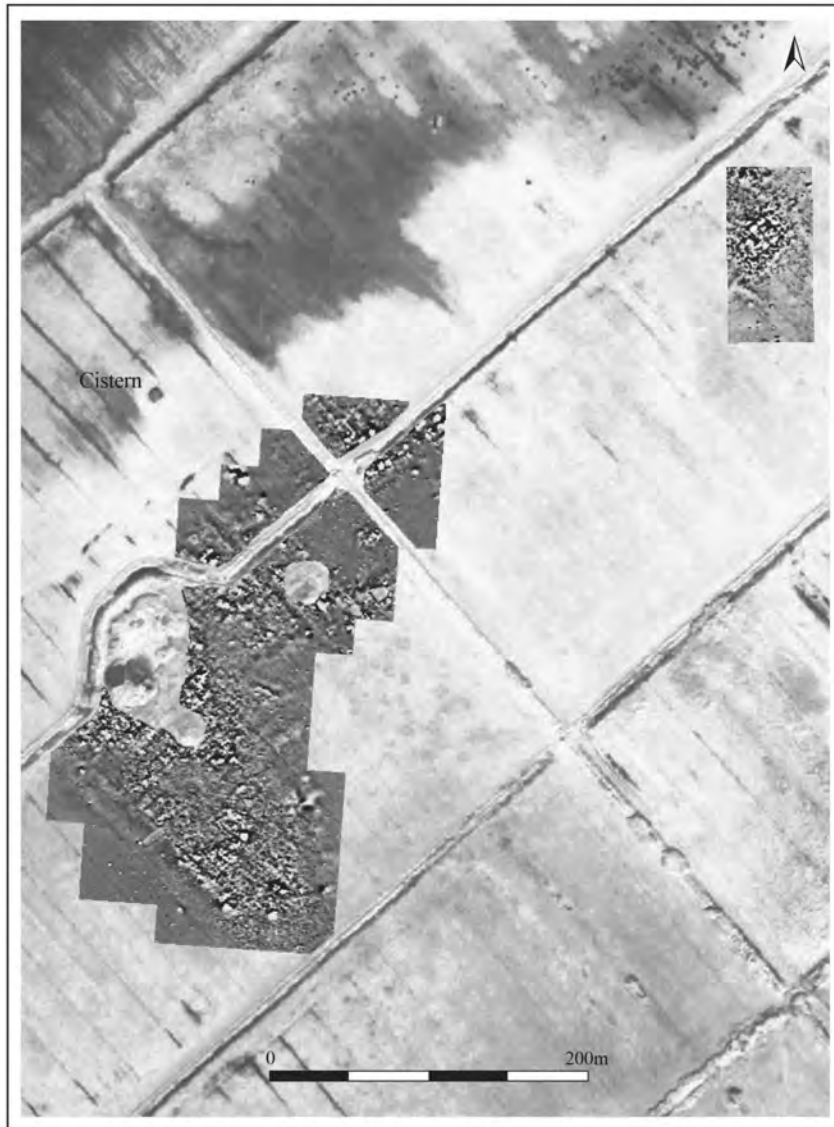


Figure 1.9. The geophysical plot of the main area of the Vrina Plain settlement as well as the outlying eastern Roman residence (after Bescoby 2007)

complex succession of sediments showing a transition from marine conditions, through a fairly short-lived estuarine environment, to the development of an alluvial plain. As part of this study a core was also taken from Lake Buŕi, which, due to its small catchment size, was considered the best source of proxy environmental indicators in the Butrint area. Two subsequent borehole transects were also undertaken close to the extant buildings in order to examine the underlying geomorphological formation and establish the environmental framework for the settlement.¹⁹

A field survey was undertaken in 1994–96, the aim of which was to examine the nature of the archaeological settlement pattern within the immediate environs of the city of Butrint.²⁰ The survey was limited to four areas to the south and east of Butrint, covering six different types of terrain. Although it provided information on a range of sites from the prehistoric through to the Roman period, it was noted by the author that the conclusions reached

had to be treated with caution as the visibility of sites could be skewed since the differing alluviation processes identified by the sedimentary survey meant that the surface scatters did not necessarily reflect the true pattern of human settlement in the landscape.²¹

In order to understand and interpret the surface remains better a proton magnetometer survey was undertaken by the Albanian Institute of Archaeology in April 1995. This led to a geophysical survey undertaken by the School of Environmental Science from the University of East Anglia and GSB Prospection Ltd on behalf of the Butrint Foundation between 1998 and 1999.²² The survey was carried out using two techniques: an area covering approximately 20 ha was surveyed using a Geoscan FM36 fluxgate gradiometer at a sensitivity of 0.1nT; and 4 ha with a Geoscan RM4 ground resistivity meter with a 1 m electrode spacing (Fig. 1.9). Between 2000 and 2001 an area covering 3.7 ha of the original survey was re-surveyed



Figure 1.10. View of the Vrina Plain excavations looking along the line of the drainage ditch

using a caesium vapour magnetometer.²³ The results of these surveys were tested by trial excavations in 2001.²⁴

Overall the ground-penetrating survey work identified extensive remains of destroyed masonry structures set within what seemed to be an orthogonal street grid. Combined with the ceramics found across the entire area, the resulting data led to the conclusion that potentially this had actually been a suburb of Roman Butrint, quite possibly the first elements of the colony created by Julius Caesar in 44 BC and re-established by Augustus after his victory at Actium in 31 BC. As a result of this, from 2002 to 2007 a major archaeological assessment was undertaken by the Butrint Foundation in order to test this theory and to try and understand the extent and character of the archaeological remains.

A brief overview of the excavations

The excavations were initially centred on one of the large drainage ditches which criss-cross the plain (Fig. 1.10). Unlike the majority of the ditches, which ran straight across the plain, the ditch chosen to be investigated had been dug with a large kink in it. This deliberate bend was necessary

in order to avoid a series of upstanding remains, consisting of a number of buildings in varying states of preservation that formed a visible marker on the plain. These included a large semicircular building of tile and masonry, a two-roomed structure just to the east with walls standing 2.60 m from the modern ground-surface, and the corner of a building infilled by rubble dumped probably from the 1960s clearance; this rubble included one block decorated with wreaths and garlands framing a trident in relief – thought to be a fragment of an altar dedicated to Neptune.

At the time local shepherds were using the ruins as a convenient pen for their sheep during a regular cycle of milking. The southern room of the two-roomed structure had been converted into a small hut with a wicker superstructure supporting a thatched roof; Roman tiles had been recycled to form a sleeping platform adjacent to an open fire. The flat area to the northeast of the second room was used to contain the sheep after milking, the surrounding vegetation having been permitted to grow to form a natural palisade. A milking pen connected this to an area to the north of the semicircular structure that was used as a gathering point.

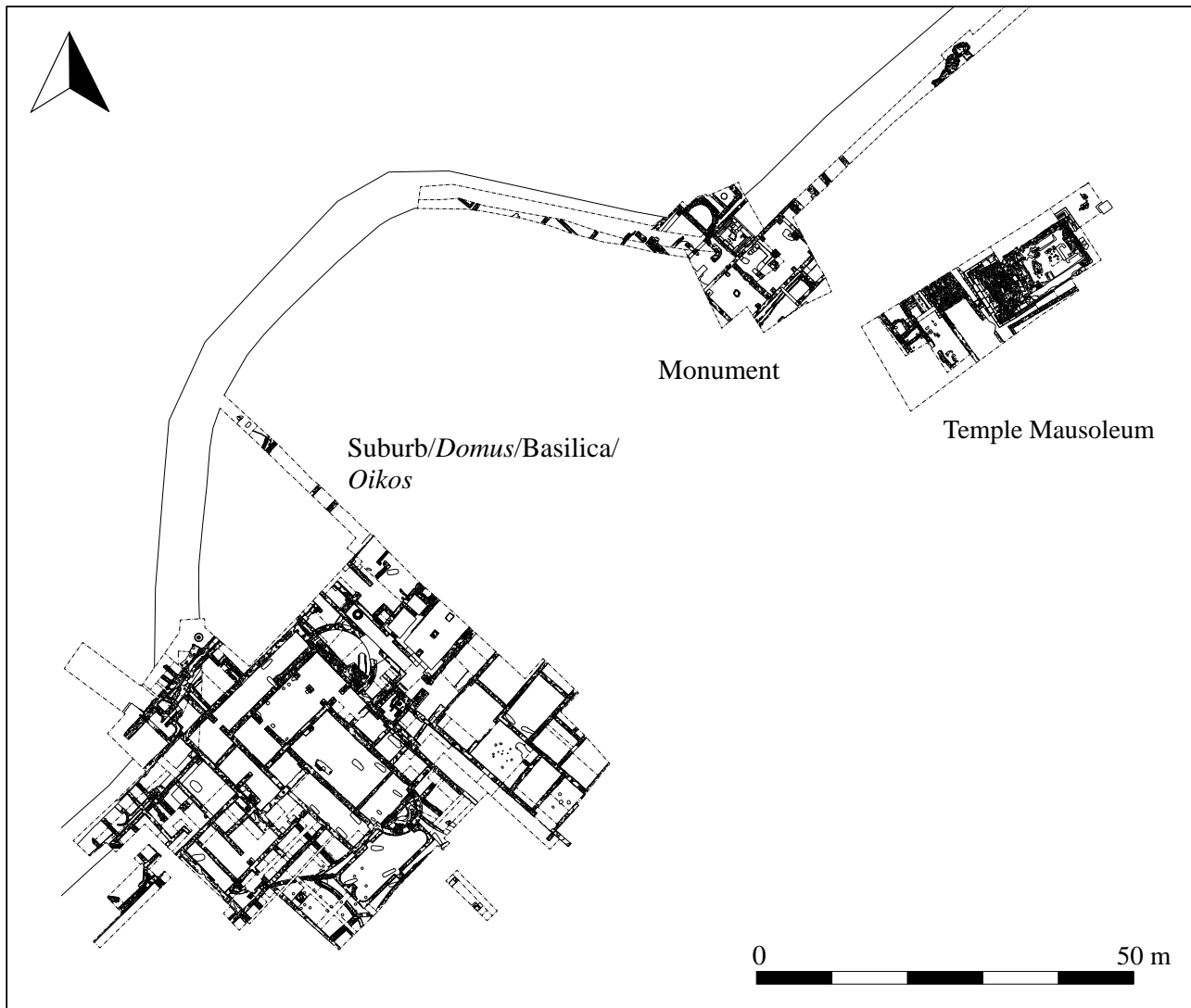


Figure 1.11. The Vrina Plain excavations

The ditch was treated as an evaluation trench: the sides and base were cut back and cleaned, and all exposed features fully recorded. In all, a length of roughly 250 m was investigated. In order to form a connection with the standing remains a further trench, measuring 67 m, was dug at right-angles to the ditch at its western end. These carefully controlled excavations exposed a cross-section of the Vrina Plain settlement and offered an important first insight to the dating and layout of the settlement, as well as confirming the complexity of the initial geophysical survey.²⁵ Among the features exposed during the evaluation was a collapsed arch of the aqueduct, along with the base of a finely worked square monument. Elements of a substantial bath-house and cistern were also exposed within the area of the standing remains. Following the completion of the 2002 assessment the area to the west of the cistern was further investigated by the Albanian Institute of Archaeology. This rudimentary clearance excavation removed a large amount of deposits and exposed various phases of walling and features of all periods.

Following on from these trial excavations, a number of areas were examined in greater detail (Fig. 1.11). One of these excavations was centred on the square monument.²⁶ Along with identifying a contemporary surface of limestone slabs located along the northern edge of the monument, the excavations uncovered a series of walls of later rooms enclosing the northern, southern and western sides of the monument. The eastern side seems to have remained open, indicating that the monument could still be accessed despite the construction of the surrounding buildings. Only the southern room was fully exposed and was found to consist of a rectangular structure with annexed spaces to the east and west of it. This building appeared to have undergone a complex sequence of rebuilds and alterations over time, including at one point the addition of nine internal masonry piers/buttresses along with an internal division wall to support a second floor. At some point the role of the surrounding buildings was altered when an apsidal-ended building was constructed to the northwest of the monument, built partially over the northern buildings.

A second open-area excavation was focused on a rectangular structure located to the southeast of the square monument which had initially been excavated by the Albanian Institute of Archaeology in the late 1980s.²⁷ Due to its proximity to the aqueduct, the piers of which were located c. 3.30 m to the east of it, this structure had been interpreted as a bath-house or cistern dating to the early Imperial period. Cleaning and recording of the building revealed that the structure had been built upon a podium and had been accessed from the west, where the robbed-out impression of a staircase was found fronting the building. Within the building the impressions of five rectangular structures were found at its eastern end. Such an internal arrangement seemed at odds with the original interpretation of the building. The earlier excavations had recovered various sculptural pieces across the site, including fragments of a head and torso as well as reliefs and architectural fragments that appeared funerary in nature. As fragments of human bones were also found within the backfill of the 1980s excavations the building was reinterpreted as a mausoleum that had been built to look like a raised temple.²⁸ Subsequent excavations along the sides of the mausoleum revealed further traces of broken sculptural pieces as well as *in situ* fragments of the lower marble facing of the building, indicating that this would have been an imposing structure. New excavations were also carried out to the west of the building where part of an earlier north–south-aligned road fronting the steps of the mausoleum was exposed; on the opposite side of the road a pavement was found fronting the colonnade of a portico that would have faced the mausoleum. Over time this western area appears to have been gradually altered: a series of crudely built structures made of rough clay-bonded stone and tile walls was found built over the line of the proposed portico. Fragments of masonry from the Temple were found in some of the walls of these buildings.

The largest and most intense area of excavation was centred on the upstanding buildings. Between 2004 and 2007 an area roughly 65×45 m was excavated, generating almost 1200 contexts from which large quantities of Roman and medieval pottery were collected as well as over 600 small finds, including almost 500 coins. These results, combined with the structural remains, have enabled the creation of an important picture of a changing landscape from the 1st century AD to the 13th century AD (Plate 1.1).²⁹

The earliest evidence of occupation on the site dates to the mid-1st century AD when a series of buildings of varying sizes was constructed across the site, some of which fronted onto a road. By the 2nd century AD, occupation had expanded and a new cistern was built near the eastern edge of the site in order to meet the demands of an expanding populace. By the mid-3rd century, the nature of the occupation had changed and the area seems to have come under the control of one individual, who constructed a large and spacious peristyle *domus* across the site. To allow for the construction of this large structure the earlier buildings were either demolished, as in the case

of the buildings found to the west of the site, or they were integrated into the new build, as seems to be the case for the eastern buildings. The suburban townhouse was occupied until the mid-4th century, at which point it was abandoned. This period of abandonment was only for a short period as by the start of the 5th century the site was reoccupied and a number of alterations were made to the standing buildings. By the beginning of the 6th century the townhouse had been modified with the construction of a north–south-aligned apsidal basilica, floored with a series of intricate mosaics.³⁰ The religious focus of the site appears to have lasted till the middle of the 6th century when the site was abandoned, possibly as a result of it having been partially damaged by fire. For the next three hundred years the site was deserted but in the mid-9th century the buildings were reoccupied, becoming the manor-house or aristocratic *oikos* of a Byzantine official, possibly the commander of Butrint. The deposits that infilled the abandoned buildings were cleaned out and the buildings repaired. A small cemetery was created in the area of the former courtyard. Across the site more than 50 Byzantine coins spanning the period c. AD 820–950 have been found in post-occupation deposits. These, along with the ceramic assemblage and the discovery of five lead seals, would seem to indicate that by the mid-9th century the site had become a centre of regional, as well as international, administration. This centre was occupied until the middle of the 10th century when, due to problems with a rising water table, the administrative focus shifted back into Butrint. From this time onwards the buildings appear to have collapsed and become an easy source of stone, some of which may have been quarried to construct the new defensive walls that were built around the lower shoreline of Butrint. Despite this, the southern end of the basilica remained a focal point, with a devotional element indicated by three child burials centred on the sanctuary and apse of the earlier building. With the collapse of the apse sometime after the mid-12th century, a ‘black earth’ deposit built up over the remains. This post-abandonment deposit, varying in depth from between c. 0.35 m to 0.60 m, contained a mixed ceramic assemblage with material from the 2nd, 3rd, 5th and 6th centuries, as well as ceramics covering the period from the 9th to the 13th century. The coin finds cover a similar wide range. Among the latest coins are three of Manuel Comnenus I (AD 1143–80). The sanctity of the site was preserved as a number of burials were found cut through these deposits within the ruins. The final visible activity across the site was a series of post-holes cut through the black soils indicating seasonal occupation by local shepherds, along with a rock pile that may either have been stockpiled from the quarrying of the decaying building or been collected-up by a farmer following ploughing and deliberately dumped at the edge of his field.

In all, the excavations identified 16 phases of activity covering the period from the mid-1st century AD up to the modern day. These phases are summarised in Table 1.1 and visually by Plate 1.2.

Table 1.1. Overview of the development of the Vrina Plain settlement: Phases 1–16

Phase	Date (AD)	Domus area	Monument area	Temple Mausoleum area
1	Mid-1st–early 2nd century	Initial occupation: road system and number of large, well-appointed houses constructed, some incorporating shops fronting the roads	Roadway, building and smaller structure associated with early suburbs	Aqueduct constructed, cut into deposit containing Late Republican pottery. Two-roomed building located to the west of it
2	2nd–early 3rd century	Development expands: large cistern and series of new houses built. Some of earlier buildings altered	Phase 2a: evidence of use in area in form of either a paved precinct or early monumental structure – Monument 2 – built into early to mid-2nd century layer	
			Phase 2b: Monument 1 built slightly over Monument 2. Monument 2 potentially used as pavement in conjunction with Monument 1. Monument 1 cut into a 2nd-century deposit with a late 2nd century related occupation layer. Two votive boxes built along southeastern side. Monument 2 eventually covered over within this period	
3a	Mid–late 3rd century	Occupation changes: site taken over by a single residence, a large double peristyle <i>domus</i>	Continued use of Monument 1 shown by occupation layers dated to early–mid-3rd century associated with the monument	Road layout altered with the construction of <i>domus</i> across western suburb. Large Temple mausoleum constructed along eastern side of new road; new service building with portico built to west
3b	Early–mid-4th century	Encasing wall built behind the apse of hall and new bath-house added to east. Octagonal tower added to western bath-house. Small-scale alterations to East wing and Southern Building		
4	Late 4th century	Villa abandoned as result of earthquake Unusual double burial interred within courtyard fronting western entrance of apsidal hall	No dating for this period round Monument area	Temple mausoleum maintained but deteriorating. Rough wall built to east of it. Alterations made to service building; portico sub-divided
5	Early 5th century	Site reoccupied: apse of apsidal hall repaired and two buttress walls built either side of apse to support new build. Southern courtyard partially levelled over leaving only inner pool of central feature in use. Eastern cistern altered	Phase 5a: Rectangular building constructed beside Monument 1. Some industrial activity and drain added	
			Phase 5b: Piers inserted in rectangular building, and possible second floor. Set of rooms built on northwest side of rectangular building, covering Monument 1. Possible portico added to building to southeast; drain covered by this time	
			Phase 5c: Main room divided into two. Threshold inserted into northeastern wall; building extended to northeast	
			Phase 5d: Central piers added to both main rooms giving extra support. Blocking walls built between portico piers. Further walls added to northwest creating possible store room containing large <i>dolium</i>	

6	Mid-late 5th century	Abandonment possibly due to environmental changes; rising water table. Collapse of Xarra–Butrint aqueduct and lack of constant supply of fresh water may also have impacted upon use of villa	Possible abandonment due to environmental changes; rising water table	
7	Early 6th century	Site reoccupied: new religious focus to house with construction of basilica occupying eastern part of earlier house	Site reoccupied: small chapel built west of Monument 1, utilising walls of earlier buildings	Road resurfaced and new wall built along the western edge of it. Further deterioration of Temple mausoleum. Some tombs destroyed. Small-scale domestic activity within the <i>cella</i> . Alterations made to service building; small building built across former portico
8	Mid-6th century	Alterations undertaken due to instability of building as a result of changing environmental conditions	Possible small alterations, addition of walls cut through floor of chapel	
9	Late 6th century	Site abandoned. Building partially destroyed by fire	Abandonment of whole area; all deposits covering buildings are demolition layers; no further occupation or use of this area seen in archaeology	Buildings abandoned and area in decline. Rubble and silts building up across area. Silting up of the road forms a hollow-way. Rough wall on western side of hollow-way may suggest some use of area
10	7th–early 9th century	Minimal occupation/activity		Demolition and robbing of Temple mausoleum. Arcade of aqueduct collapses due to demolition of mausoleum's eastern wall
11	Mid-9th–mid-10th century	Site re-occupied as residence of a Byzantine official. Possible industrial role as indicated by number of kilns		Thick silty clay deposits build up across the area. Small <i>cappuccina</i> burial inserted along south side of mausoleum
12	Late 10th–11th century	Building abandoned and quarried for stone. Burials interred		
13	11th–12th century	Periodic re-use: small-scale industrial activity centred on eastern apse. Devotional use centred on southern apse. Post-built structure constructed in courtyard		
14	Late 12th–13th century	Abandoned: wall of the southern apse collapses and the site plundered for any usable stone. Dark soils build up across the site		
15	13th century	Series of burials interred within ruins. Rock pile accumulates at edge of field, dumped over ruins where land unworkable		
16	Late 13th century onwards	Wetland conditions and virtual abandonment of area until reclamation of plain in 1960s		Abandonment of area. Silty clay deposits continue to form across area covering much of mausoleum with only southern wall remaining visible

The excavations

From the inception of the Vrina Plain excavations an important element has been the role of the training school (Fig. 1.12). Every year from 2000 to 2012 over 30 Albanian university students were trained in modern archaeological methods and techniques by a dedicated team of supervisors, including former Albanian students who have now become professional archaeologists in their own right. Students from Bulgaria, Croatia, France, Holland, Italy, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States have also participated in the summer schools. Since 2008, new excavations on the Vrina Plain have been largely managed, administered and reported-on by young Albanian archaeologists from the Albanian Heritage Foundation, working in close

partnership with Albanian national institutions, the Butrint National Park, and Albanian universities.

With excavation comes conservation. One of the biggest projects on the Vrina Plain with regards to conservation was the consolidation of the various mosaics uncovered. These were initially recorded both through careful descriptive means by John Mitchell (University of East Anglia) (Fig. 1.13) and photographically with a digital, fully rectified photogrammetric survey undertaken by Massimo Zanfini (University of Bologna) (Fig. 1.14). Initial consolidation of the mosaics was carried out by Pippa Pearce of the British Museum in 2005 and 2006. A full assessment of the condition of the mosaics was carried out in 2006 and a conservation programme implemented between 2006



Figure 1.12. Students on the Training School being taught the techniques of archaeological recording



Figure 1.15. Conserving the basilica mosaic



Figure 1.13. Recording the basilica mosaic descriptively



Figure 1.14. Recording the basilica mosaic photographically



Figure 1.16. A lady from the village of Shën Dëlli creating an embroidery image of the bird and figs motif from the basilica mosaic

and 2007 by Jacques Negeur and Ghaleb Abu Diab of the Israel Antiquities Authority, assisted by Agiron Islami of the Albanian Institute of Monuments.

Of the mosaics consolidated, the basilica mosaic showed the most deterioration. Fifty percent of the mosaic was damaged, while unstable foundations and fluctuating groundwater levels had resulted in slumping, cracking and detachment of *tesserae*. In order to stabilise the surface, holes (including grave cuts) were filled with layers of stone, sand and tile to provide both stability and good water permeability. These were then capped with two layers of lime mortar: one mixed with crushed ceramic and marble

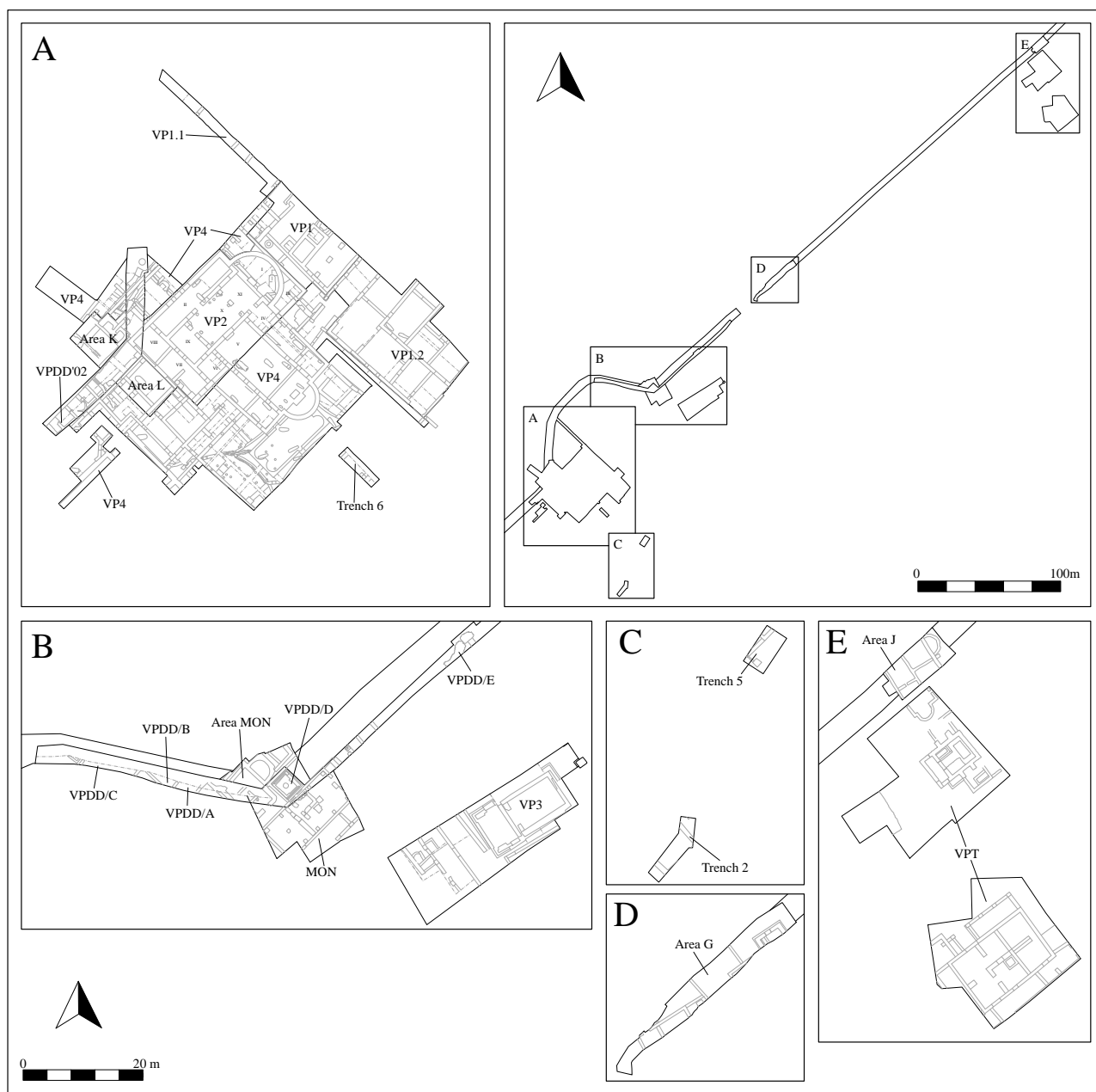


Figure 1.17. Location plan of the area codes and trenches used during the Vrina Plain excavations 2002–08

powder; the other with added crushed tile and limestone. The edges of the mosaic were then consolidated and loose *tesserae* replaced (Fig. 1.15). Following this, the entire mosaic was then covered by a thick layer of sand to prevent root damage.

As part of the conservation aims it had been hoped that, as with the villa at Diaporit, the Vrina Plain would be presented as a visitor attraction outside the confines of the walls of Butrint. During the course of the excavations a number of single individuals, along with larger organised walking tours, had visited the excavations. These parties had all been extremely interested in the excavations, asking many questions that the team were happy to answer and that helped these individuals leave with a new insight to

the story of Butrint. Unfortunately, due to the difficulty in maintaining the upkeep of the site and problems with rising ground water it was decided to cover the excavations fully and so return the area to its pastoral aspect. As part of this programme, in the summer of 2010 the standing remains were conserved by a team of Albanian and international students who were being trained in practical conservation techniques, a new training programme organised in co-operation with the Albanian Archaeological Service Agency and the Albanian Heritage Foundation. In order that future independent travellers exploring the Vrina Plain might understand the remains, information panels have been set up detailing the excavations and the role the buildings uncovered played in a changing landscape.

Table 1.2. Summary of excavations undertaken on the Vrina Plain 2002–2012

<i>Year</i>	<i>Site code</i>	<i>Context nos</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Team</i>
2002	VPDD/A	1000–1197	Drainage ditch, southern end of eastern loop	BF members, professionals and students
	VPDD/B		Drainage ditch, central part of eastern loop	
	VPDD/C		Drainage ditch, northern end of eastern loop	
	VPDD/D		Drainage ditch, Monument area	
	VPDD/E		Drainage ditch, collapsed aqueduct pier	
	VPDD		Drainage ditch, western end	
	VP1	1–71	Trench over standing ruins exposing cistern and area to the north	Student training excavations
	VP1.1	72–80	Northern continuation of VP1 over bath-house connecting with drainage ditch excavations	Student training excavations
2003	Area G	2000–2268	Drainage ditch, tomb and buildings east of aqueduct	BF members, professionals and students
	Area J		Drainage ditch, bath-house at far eastern end of ditch	
	Area K		Bath-house to north of western end of drainage ditch	
	Area L		Series of walls and floors outside western end of apsidal room of standing remains, north of Area K	
	MON	1500–1550	Monument area	BF members, professionals and students
	VP1		Trench over standing ruins exposing cistern and area to north	
		100–108		Student training excavations
		116–121		
		124–127		
	VP1.1	81–97	Northern continuation of VP1 over bath-house	Student training excavations
	VP1.2	99	Southern continuation of VP1 over road and rooms to south	Student training excavations
		109–115		
		122–123		
		128–136		
		146–151		
	VP2	137–145	Eastern end of apsidal room of standing remains	Student training excavations
2004	VP1.2	3035	Road	Student training excavations
		3047		
		3061–3066		
	VP2	3000	Central area of the apsidal room of the standing remains, medieval layers removed and basilica located	Student training excavations
		3003–3013		
		3032–3034		
		3036–3046		
		3048–3060		
		3067–3104		
		3106–3149		
	VP3	3001–3002	Temple Mausoleum	Student training excavations
		3014–3031		
		3105		
	MON	4000–4044	Monument area	BF members, professionals and students
2005	VP1.2	3400–3446	Road and rooms to the south	Student training excavations
	VP2	3300–3311	Triangular area to north of 2004 excavations	BF members, professionals and students
	VP3	5000–5039	Temple Mausoleum	Student training excavations
	VP4	3200–3299 3312–3321	Basilica and central nave	BF members, professionals and students

2006	VP1.2	3452–3609	Rooms to south of road	Student training excavations
	VP3	5040–5084	Temple Mausoleum	Student training excavations
	VP4	3322–3399 3700–3999 7002–7046	Eastern and western aisles of basilica and area outside; medieval layers removed and discovery of earlier townhouse	BF members, professionals and students
2007	VP3	5090–5129	Temple Mausoleum	Student training excavations
	VP4	7047–7301	<i>Domus</i>	BF members, professionals and students
	Trench 2	7700–7741	Southern bath-house	BF members, professionals and students
	Trench 5	7800–7834	Southern courtyard	AHF members, professionals and students
	Trench 6	7900–7912	Southern portico	AHF members, professionals and students
2008	VP4	7302–7456	<i>Domus</i>	BF members
2008 – 2012	VPT	1–430	Eastern end of drainage ditch	AHF members and students

Although the main excavations have been covered, elements of the excavations can still be seen within the Butrint National Park. As part of the Community Enterprise and Development Project that was set up in 2006 to make the local communities aware of their importance in preserving the heritage of Butrint there was encouragement to create local handicrafts that could be sold in the community-run shop within Butrint. Along with designs from the better-known monuments within Butrint, such as the Baptistry mosaic, images from the Vrina basilica mosaic, such as the bird and fig motif, the shrimps and crab, and the central motif of the birds and arch way in the sanctuary, have also been used on a range of goods for tourists to remember their Butrint experience (Fig. 1.16).

This report

The aim of this monograph is to bring together all the results from the various seasons of work into one accessible report, including all the finds data. The initial archaeological results from the 2001–04 excavations were described in detail by Crowson and Gilkes.³¹ This assessment was both a narrative and a descriptive text that details a number of the structures that will also be referred to in this volume. Where this overlap occurs the former will be acknowledged as the primary descriptive reference, with only a summary of the buildings provided in this volume. In certain cases, however, new discoveries about some of the buildings have made it necessary to write a fuller and more detailed description in the present volume. The phasing of some of

the buildings has altered also from the initial assessment.

The report has been written as a narrative, phase by phase, with individual context descriptions limited to those important structural and occupational elements that make up the various phases. In the process, though, some ambiguities can occur in the interpretation of a site, especially on one such as the Vrina Plain, which has a very complex depositional as well as structural sequence. As the excavations expanded, assumptions and ideas about the site changed rapidly. What was thought initially to be a colonnaded road in 2005 turned out to be the northern portico of the 3rd-century *domus* when this area was properly excavated in the following year.³² Consequently, the present volume has tried to present as complete a picture of the site as possible but it is inevitable that some ideas and interpretations are not going to be so clear cut as others, either due to the lack of dating or because of the limited area that was investigated.

For more information, the full archive of the excavations has been fully digitised and can be accessed online via the Integrated Archaeological Database developed and maintained by the York Archaeological Trust. The physical records of the excavations, along with the entire archive of the Butrint Foundation, is stored at Waddesdon Manor, Buckinghamshire.

In all six main seasons of excavation were carried out on the Vrina Plain between 2002 and 2007, with a further year in 2008 restricted to a series of small trenches dug specifically to answer questions regarding the layout, date, function and morphology of a number of rooms and

areas of the townhouse (Plate 1.3). The excavations were originally begun as separate trenches with individual site codes for the various areas. Following the expansion of the excavations between 2005 and 2007, a number of these trenches became part of the large open-area excavations centred on the townhouse/basilica/*oikos* site (Fig. 1.17). These codes, included on the database, have caused some confusion and are summarised in Table 2.1. For each season new context numbers were given out, with block numbers assigned to the various areas. In all, over 2000 contexts were given out. The Butrint Training School excavations, carried out by the Albanian Heritage Foundation at the eastern end of the drainage ditch between 2008 and 2012, are also included in the table.

Notes

- 1 Martin 2001.
- 2 Lane 2004, 36–46.
- 3 Durrell 1959, 178.
- 4 Pluciennik *et al.* 2004, 51–4.
- 5 Hounslow and Chepstow-Lusty 2004, 396–7.
- 6 Map Room, Royal Geographic Society, London. This image is reproduced in Lane 2004, fig. 3.7.
- 7 Hydrographic Office L/mf 2073/2.
- 8 United Kingdom Hydrological Data Centre, Taunton. This image is reproduced in Hodges 2006, 27.
- 9 PRO ADM 53/8464, log of HMS *Firefly* (Hydrographic Office 6641/1, A 1113/1). This image is reproduced in Lane 2004, fig. 3.6 and in Crowson and Gilkes 2007, fig. 8.2.
- 10 Leake 1835, 105.
- 11 Pouqueville 1820, 34–5.
- 12 For Lear's view of the Vrina Plain from Mount Sotira, see Hodges 2006, 34.
- 13 Durrell 1959, 178.
- 14 Ugolini 1927.
- 15 It was during these explorations upon the Vrina Plain that Ugolini purchased the so-called Nike relief from fishermen, depicting the winged Victory goddess standing in front of a cuirass. This relief probably decorated a major public building or monument within the new suburb. Hodges 2006, 107–09; Hansen 2009, 32–3.
- 16 Budina 1971.
- 17 Bescoby 2003; 2007, 95–118; Chroston and Hounslow 2004, 64–75; Hodges *et al.* 1997, 211–14; Pluciennik *et al.* 2004, 47–63.
- 18 Lane *et al.* 2004, 27–46.
- 19 Bescoby 2007, 95–6; 2011.
- 20 Pluciennik *et al.* 2004, 47–63.
- 21 Pluciennik *et al.* 2004, 54–7.
- 22 Chroston and Hounslow 2004, 64–75.
- 23 Bescoby 2007, 96.
- 24 Bescoby 2003; 2007, 114.
- 25 Crowson and Gilkes 2007, 119–64.
- 26 Crowson and Gilkes 2007, 131–6; Ricciardi 2007, 165–74.
- 27 Çondi 1988.
- 28 Crowson and Gilkes 2007, 126–31; Gilkes, Hysa and Çondi 2013.
- 29 Greenslade 2013, 123–64; Greenslade and Çondi 2011, 265–77; Greenslade *et al.* 2006, 397–408; Mitchell, Gilkes and Çondi 2005, 107–28.
- 30 Throughout Chapters 3 to 8 the alignment of the various buildings are discussed as being orientated N-S, E-W when in reality they are actually NW-SE, NE-SW. The reason for using the former description for the various buildings is to simplify the narrative for the reader. Where a context is aligned properly to compass point, as in the case of the Phase 11 burials, the word 'true' has been used before the orientation to indicate this.
- 31 Crowson and Gilkes 2007, 119–64.
- 32 Greenslade *et al.* 2006, 397–408; Greenslade 2013; Greenslade and Çondi 2011, 265–77.

2 The Roman land organisation of the Butrint hinterland

David Bescoby

Introduction

The Roman landscapes surrounding Butrint seem distant to the contemporary observer, rearranged by ceaseless environmental processes and occluded by a dense overlay of modern agricultural engineering. It is only the occasional prominence of extant remains, such as the small groups of aqueduct piers or scatters of ceramic material, that remind us that the coastal floodplain which tapers southwards towards Çuka e Ajtoit once formed an inseparable component of a 'Romanised' Butrint.

Historically, the study of Roman and indeed Greek land organisation in various parts of the Mediterranean owes much to the application of aerial photography. In particular, surviving photographic archives from the Second World War have proved immensely useful, often capturing rural landscapes little changed since the medieval period.¹ At Butrint, such images have also played a role in the identification of evidence for systematic land organisation or 'centuriation', the photographs preserving many landscape features subsequently lost to programmes of post-war agricultural intensification. This early work enabled some initial theory building regarding the organisation of the suburb discovered on the Vrina Plain and the landscape that surrounded it.

In this chapter we take the opportunity to re-examine some of this early work in the light of the extensive excavations that have since taken place on the Vrina Plain. In particular, the discovery of a number of streets within the Vrina Plain settlement and further elucidation regarding the layout of the aqueduct and approach roads has allowed us to re-examine the wider organisation of the surrounding landscape.

Background

Before considering the landscape evidence, it is worth briefly reviewing the geopolitical and economic backdrop to Roman influence at Butrint, culminating in the colonial foundation of Augustus. The region benefited from good

relations with Rome during the 3rd and 2nd century BC, contributing to a period of relative economic prosperity and autonomy once under Roman control.² Prior to the Roman conquest, it is likely that land would have been organised on the basis of communal family ownership of small farms. The existence of these influential local families is evident from the manumission acts inscribed on the *parados* of the theatre of Butrint.³ Post-conquest, a change in land ownership, and possibly land use, is inferred as a wealthy Roman senatorial class, the *Epirotici homines* of Cicero's correspondence, began to acquire substantial estates in the region.⁴

Archaeological evidence for several centuries of seemingly productive land use is sketchy, although the continued functioning of fortified Hellenistic sites such as Malathrea, Çuka and Dobra as rural settlements and farmsteads may provide a clue. The make-up of the agricultural economy at this time is also hard to gauge, although according to written sources, stock-rearing formed an important element.⁵ Settlers who arrived through private initiative, such as Titus Pomponius Atticus who settled in 68 BC, often became known as professional stock breeders.⁶ Such estates amassed huge tracts of land, turning them over to large-scale stock breeding, presumably to the detriment of more traditional forms of agriculture. Either way, cereal production is unlikely to have been as intensive as in later periods and it is interesting that Julius Caesar was unable to feed his troops from local produce during his campaign against Pompey, being forced to import grain from other provinces.⁷

With the establishment of the Caesarian colony at Butrint, and the arrival of Caius Munatius Plancus with what was probably a small number of civilian colonists, the level of disruption caused by the much-feared confiscation and redistribution of land is hard to judge.⁸ The Cicero correspondence in itself does highlight the extent to which large estates fuelled by cheap slave labour had come to flourish in the region.

If this first colonial declaration largely failed to bring

about the scale of change in existing patterns of agriculture and land holding required to imprint on the archaeological record, the second decree of colonial foundation issued by Augustus sometime after 31 BC holds far greater potential. It is in the wake of these constitutional and political shifts, reflected so clearly in the built fabric of Butrint itself, that the 1st-century AD expansion onto the Vrina Plain takes place.

It is to this period of colonial impetus that the wider reorganisation of the hinterland has also been attributed, although as has been previously acknowledged, the relationship between rural and urban change is difficult to detect archaeologically, particularly within a meaningful timescale.⁹ In addition to probable landscape reorganisation in terms of land allocation, the prevailing estuarine conditions are likely to have led to programmes of land-reclamation, with marginal marshy lands flanking the major waterways being actively managed and improved through drainage schemes. No extant evidence for such schemes has survived the widespread implementation of modern drainage and irrigation schemes. It has, however, become evident that settlement on the distal margins of the plain battled against a background of rising water levels, driven primarily by ongoing subsidence of the area within the local tectonic regime, reinforcing an upward trend in relative sea level. Evidence for the mitigation of an increasing propensity towards flooding, particularly following seismic episodes, is seen at several low-lying locations throughout Butrint.¹⁰

The organisation of the Butrint hinterland

The initial study undertaken in 2006 sought evidence of land divisions through the analysis of a series of aerial photographs taken during an RAF sortie along the Albanian coastline in 1943. Using key angular alignments from Butrint and those of recently excavated buildings on the Vrina Plain as a reference, corresponding angular alignments were sought within the AP images using an automated computational routine.¹¹ A statistically significant number of alignments were detected, corresponding to hedges, tracks and other linear features. Detected linear features in the image were filtered to leave only those whose spacing was divisible by one *actus* (defined as 35.35 m – in keeping with measurements from contemporary colonial foundations). The remaining features were then used to reconstruct a grid corresponding, in theory, to the original divisions of the *agrimensores*. Results from the original study overlain onto the aerial photographs used are shown in Plate 2.1. The majority of alignments conformed to a 20×20 *actus* grid, which was taken as evidence that the centuriation most likely belonged to the Augustan era, reflecting similar schemes associated with Augustan colonies at Nicopolis, Patras and Corinth.¹² Assuming adherence to the tenants of Roman surveying, the alignment of the centuriation seems to conform to that of a major roadway, constructed either as part of

the reorganisation or following a pre-existing route.¹³ While no section of the ancient road has been positively identified, an alignment along the northeastern edge of the valley close to the modern road is predicted, linking the Hellenistic settlements of Çuka e Ajtoit, Malathrea and Mursia, before turning northwards at Xarra. The road then runs along the western flank of Mount Mile, with a spur connecting Kalivo and Diaporit. This hypothesised route, along with the 20×20 *actus* grid system from the original study, are shown in Figure 2.1, overlain upon a topographic reconstruction of the Roman landscape.¹⁴

One of the key points to establish is the degree to which this system of land organisation influenced the topography and layout of settlement on the Vrina Plain. Taking the spatial position of surviving building remains, i.e. those indicated in the large-scale geophysical surveys as well as from later excavation, a constraining influence of the centuriation scheme on the overall layout appears evident. Figure 2.2 shows the outline of known buildings in relation to the reconstructed grid. What is immediately apparent is that the axial orientation of the settlement appears to fall along the northeast–southwest division of the grid, with a string of discrete buildings following this alignment, presumably linked by a connecting roadway. We might hypothesise that the line of the original valley road was extended (from Xarra) northwestwards along the line of the grid, over the low undulating hills of Shën Dimitri – the site of an extensive Roman cemetery.

The chronology of this perceived scheme of organisation remains a key, albeit unanswered question. Late Republican evidence is scant within recent excavations, often as a result of water-logging preventing these levels from being reached. It is important, however, to attempt to establish the degree of influence such planned organisation continued to have on the evolving settlement and it is here that the sequence revealed through excavation can shed some light.

1st-century settlement of the Vrina Plain

One of the more interesting discoveries made during the recent excavations on the Vrina Plain was the emergence of an intersection of three streets within the eastern portion of the main excavated area (see Chapter 3), as shown in Figure 2.3. The alignment of these streets was found to be slightly different (by *c.* 6 degrees) to that of the proposed system of centuriation described above. The buildings that abut and open onto these streets are ascribed to the second half of the 1st century AD, sometime after the initial Augustan impulse of colonial foundation. The alignments make most sense when considered in the light of the aqueduct. The southeast-aligned street, if projected southeastwards, is found to run parallel to the course of the aqueduct along 90% of its route to Xarra, as shown in Figure 2.4.¹⁵ The potential existence of what would effectively be a new approach road from the south, running alongside the aqueduct as a spur from the pre-existing road just north of Xarra and flanked with well-appointed houses incorporating

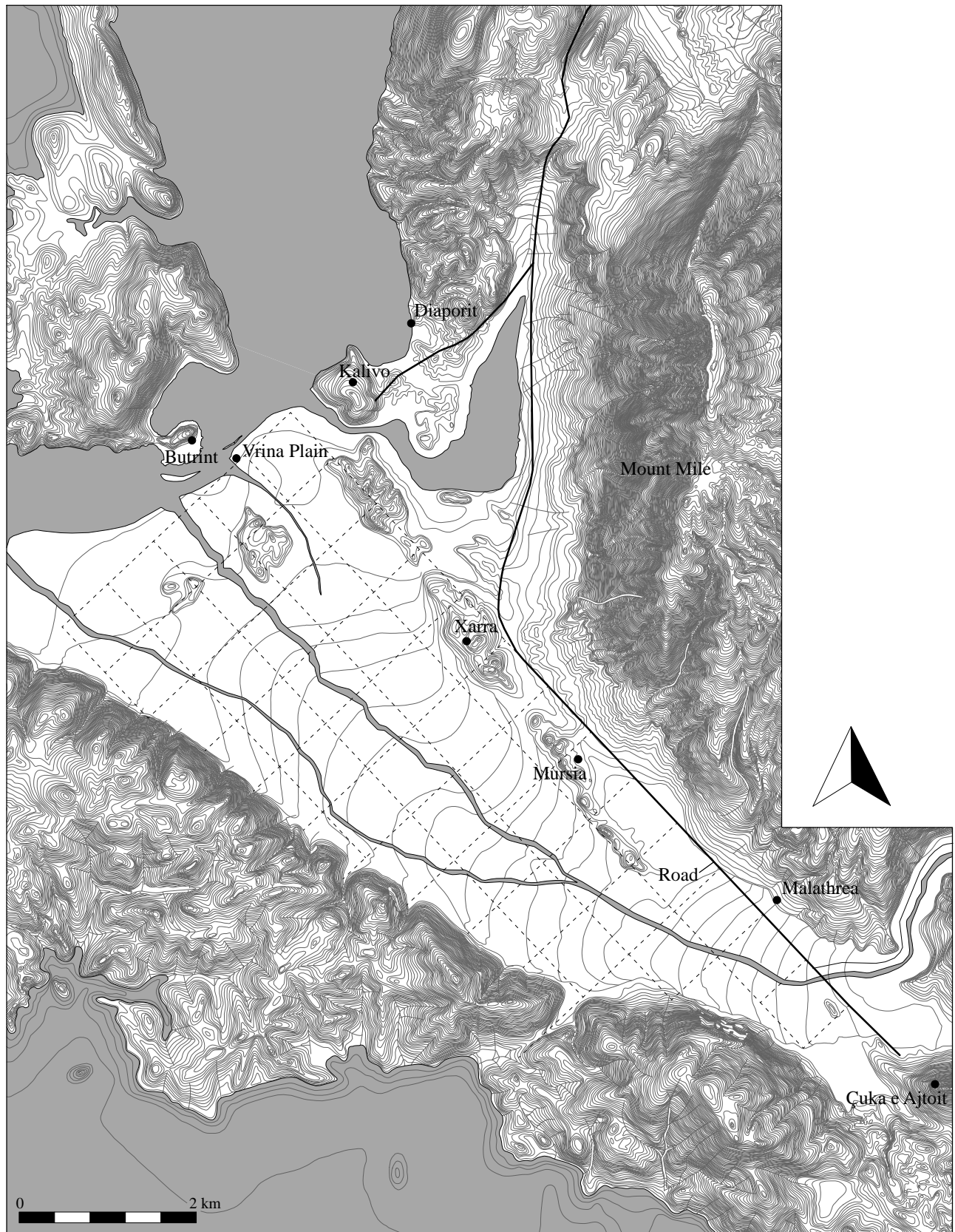


Figure 2.1. The hypothesised route of the pre-existing road, linking a chain of known sites along the edge of the valley and 20×20 actus scheme of land division identified in 2006

shop frontages, might well represent the ongoing impetus of reorganisation.

If the original road onto the margins of the plain ran up through Shën-Dimitri, turning southwestwards along the coast and connecting a row of buildings, as hypothesised above, the construction of a new approach road flanking the aqueduct throws the emphasis to the southwest. As this point marks the shortest span across the Vivari Channel, it almost certainly indicates the presence of a river crossing or bridgehead. This is no doubt reflected in the dense development coalescing around this point in proceeding centuries, contrasting with the increasingly funerary nature of structures to the northeast of the aqueduct.¹⁶ The approximate direction of a major bridge across the Vivari Channel, almost certainly dating from this time, is known from a small surviving section on the opposite bank.¹⁷

3rd-century organisation

By the mid-3rd century, the line of buildings flanking the

approach road had been replaced by a large villa. It seems probable that a new road, spurring from the approach road some 500 m to the southeast, was created and laid out to run past a large mausoleum contemporary with the extensive villa or *domus* and located 90 m to the northeast. Although only a small section of the road here was excavated (see Chapter 8, Figs 8.6 and 8.8), dating evidence, in conjunction with an increase in surface height matching that of the villa approach road, suggests it is contemporaneous with the extensive remodelling associated with the construction of the villa. Its continued path to the bridgehead is uncertain and its apparent trajectory might suggest that the bridgehead was also relocated. Interestingly, although almost certainly coincidence, this road line falls on the 20 *actus* division of the original centuration grid.

The box below provides a three-point summary of the topographic evolution of the Vrina Plain settlement in relation to wider landscape organisation during the Roman period, much of which is expanded upon in later chapters.

Summary of the early topographic evolution of the Vrina Plain in relation to landscape organisation

I – Augustan or (?) earlier influence detected in the form of land divisions within the valley conforming to 20×20 *actus* units aligned with the pre-existing approach road.

II – Augustan aqueduct and new approach road running alongside and aligning with channel crossing point. Alignment deviates from proposed centuration grid. Development of settlement from mid-1st century focused along this road axis and crossing point. It is likely that the bridge dates to this era, although the bridgehead itself has not been located.

III – From the mid-3rd century a substantial villa occupies much of the original settlement and the approach road appears to have been diverted past a large mausoleum to the north-east.

Neighbouring settlements and landscapes – the regional picture

Although the mountainous nature of the surrounding terrain gives a sense of separation from neighbouring valleys, we should not discount the potential influence of Butrint as an Augustan colony on adjoining areas, such as the Vagalat Valley to the east and the lowland areas surrounding the settlement of Phoenice to the north. The new 1st-century bridge and road into Butrint from the south would itself form a spur from a main route connecting a string of coastal towns with the new regional capital of Nicopolis. This coastal road may well have passed through the Vagalat valley as it made its way northwards towards

the Roman port of Onchesmos (modern Saranda) and onwards to Dyrrhachium. So far, no systematic survey of the Vagalat valley has been undertaken, although its wide expanse of fertile soils and evidence of Hellenistic and Roman settlement along the valley margins suggest its agricultural value.

To the north, the Hellenistic settlement of Phoenice, located upon an elongate hill rising from the valley floor and once the capital of the Epirote League, also underwent significant urban transformation from the 1st century AD.¹⁸ Much emphasis was placed on the lower-lying areas at the foot of the hill, where an orthogonal road scheme is proposed aligning with a major episode of land reclamation

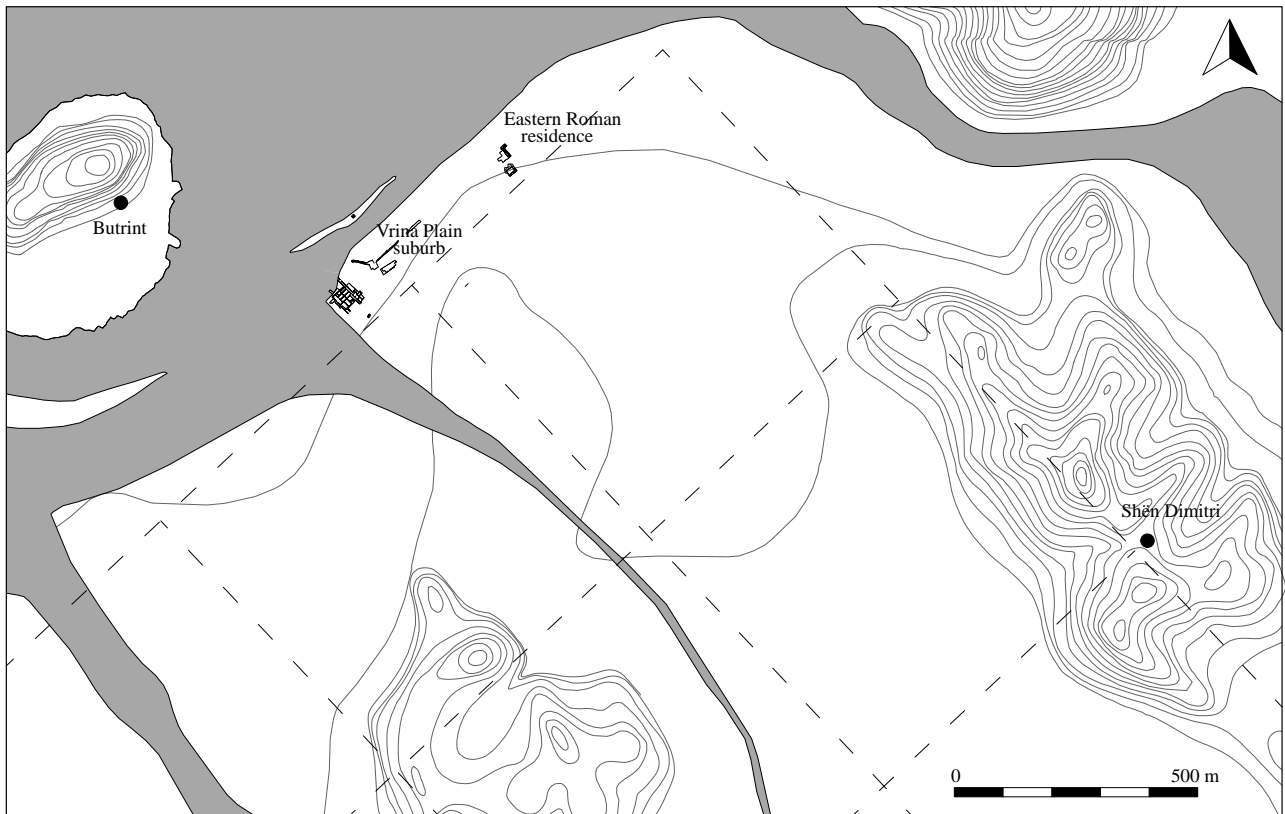


Figure 2.2. The spatial arrangement of known building remains on the Vrina Plain, in relation to the hypothesised centuriation grid

and division.¹⁹ This is particularly interesting, given that it coincides with the Augustan foundation at Butrint, which may have been the catalyst for wider landscape reorganisation at this time. At Phoenice, a system of centuriation dividing allotments into 20×10 *actus* parcels is reported, extending as far south as the current northern shore of Lake Butrint. The grid seems to align with the long axis of the hill and differs by *c.* 20 degrees from that proposed for Butrint.²⁰ The relationship between the two settlements is unclear, although likely to rest at least in part upon the degree of seaward access via river(s) feeding Lake Butrint from the north. The Augustan aqueduct at Butrint is thought to use a submerged siphon to deliver water to the city, effectively keeping coastal access to the north open,²¹ although it is not known whether the bridge across the Vivari Channel made provision for the passage of sea-going vessels. It is also possible that the river systems surrounding Phoenice had begun to silt up at this time, reducing riverine access and prompting a programme of land reclamation across newly formed marshland.

Discussion

While it does not follow that the planned layout of settlements need necessarily correlate with wider landscape organisation, perhaps the lack of correlation suggests a more diachronous development, rather than a single

unilateral event. The constitutional and political changes associated with colonial foundation might present more immediate needs for land allocation and formal division, with an emphasis upon reconstructing the civic centre of Butrint and a lag in the subsequent expansion of settlement onto the margins of the plain, driven by the proximity of a new crossing and road from the south and also the presence of the aqueduct and fresh water. In comparison with other colonial foundations within the region, the lack of a strong sense of unified reorganisation and continuum between settlement and landscape is evident. However, at Nicopolis, Augustan policy following *Actium* went far beyond the foundation of *colonia*, involving rather a process of synoecism in which large areas of the territory were reorganised – a process similar in some respects to Greek city foundations.²² In this context, centuriation is the physical manifestation of consolidation through repetition of the Roman social and political system. Strabo paints a gloomy picture of Epirus under Augustus, describing large parts of the region as desolate and it is possible that this level of disruption/stress aided the process of land reorganisation in the hinterlands surrounding Nicopolis and Patras.

The underlying situation at Butrint, which in many ways becomes the regional counterpoint to Nicopolis, appears different in terms of both its political and economic trajectory. The expansion of Italian senatorial aristocracy

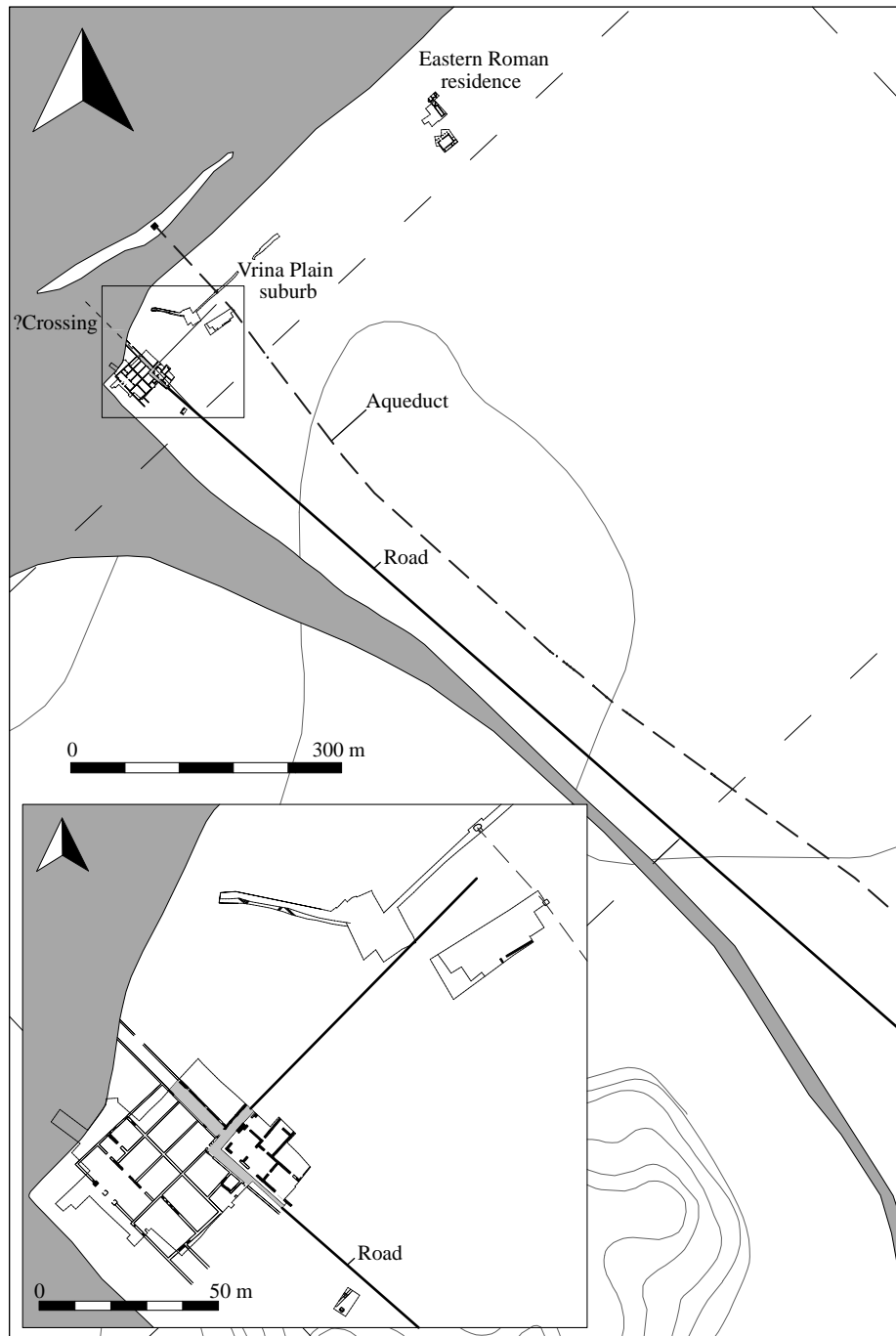


Figure 2.3. Three intersecting streets excavated on the Vrina Plain, and hypothesised new approach road

into the area no doubt provided a means through which Augustus consolidated his hold on this part of the province and the colonial foundation is unlikely to have interfered with the prosperity of these estates. This is perhaps reflected in the lack of expansion at Butrint during the Augustan period, with colonists being accommodated within the existing city limits.

It is also worth noting that the prime agricultural (arable) land is also situated towards the head of the valley, away from the coastal margins. Land surrounding the settlement, freshly reclaimed, would certainly be high in clay content,

heavy to plough and subsequently less significant. This might be reflected in the spatial distribution of the evidence for land division shown in Plate 2.1, the majority of surviving alignments being located around Mursia where the soils were lighter and the gentle, sheltered slopes along the margins of Mount Mile could be productively terraced.

But there is no doubt that the colonial foundation marked a departure from the past; the introduction of a new constitutional format of local senate-appointed magistrates reflects the degree of political change. Over time, the decline of the political dynasties that shaped the

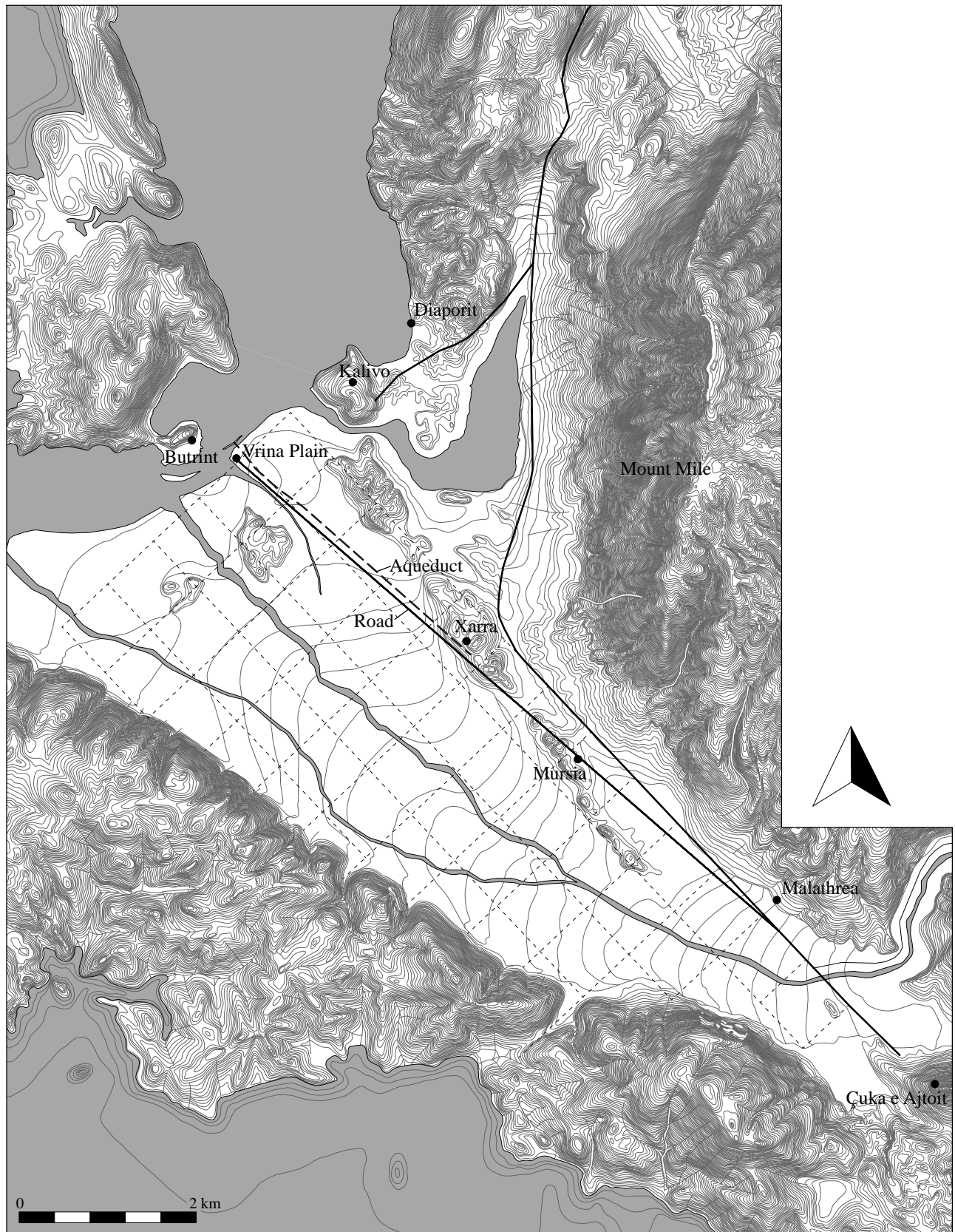


Figure 2.4. Line of hypothetical southern approach road, running alongside the aqueduct

late-Republican town may have allowed a new generation of entrepreneurial élites to emerge, able to take advantage of new economic opportunities. Such changes ultimately culminate in the kind of urban remodelling seen on the Vrina Plain from the mid-3rd century.

Does this infer a decline in the great estates, just as their growth signalled the decline of the pre-Roman agricultural system? A number of documentary sources attest to the continued existence of this kind of establishment into the 4th and early 5th century.²³ Alcock points to a rough correlation between continuity of site occupation and stability of land tenure, which suggests that the picture may be more piecemeal.²⁴ At the Malathrea villa, originally a fortified Hellenistic site on the main road between Çuka e Ajtoit and Mursia, occupation continues until the early 4th century AD, although the early Roman occupation of this site seems to have been small scale.²⁵ At the larger outlying villa of Diaporit, occupation ceases by the mid-3rd century. It is interesting to speculate about the possibilities of an economic shift towards arable production from the mid-1st century. While land division and allotment do not necessarily equate with intensive arable production, centuriation provides a means of agricultural intensification and the efficient production of an agricultural surplus. It seems feasible that agricultural production biased towards cereal cultivation may have contributed to the apparent period of prosperity enjoyed from this time. A system of centuriation would certainly facilitate agricultural intensification, not least in the collection of revenue.

Conclusions

Large-scale excavations on the Vrina Plain have permitted a fresh examination and reinterpretation of the evidence for a systematic scheme of land organisation. Landscape archaeology upon the low-lying valley floor is hampered by the destruction of earlier landscape features through widespread and intensive agricultural development, forcing a reliance on past aerial photographic analysis, which appears to reveal the remnants of a systematic organisation of the landscape into 20×20 *actus* units. While there is some topographical evidence that this scheme exerted an influence on the overall layout, a number of streets revealed by excavation deviated slightly from the original alignment, perhaps reflecting a more organic evolution of the settlement. The focal point was almost certainly a new approach road running alongside the aqueduct to a crossing point over a major road bridge.

It is hard to gauge the scale and nature of the agricultural economy connected with the immediate hinterland. There is a suggestion that stock-rearing was dominant in the late-Republican period, with large tracts of land controlled by great estates. A reorganisation of the landscape into *centuriae*, with good access from the *limites*, potentially swings the focus towards a more-efficient, agrarian-based economy with the capacity to produce a surplus in the

coming centuries.²⁶ The survival of a number of field boundary elements within AP images concentrated upon the fertile and easily irrigated area of the valley near Mursia may be evidence of this.

Notes

- 1 A classic example being the Po valley, see Bradford 1957. See also Dyson 2003 and Pasquinucci *et al.* 1984.
- 2 See Hansen 2009, 45 and Cabanes 1997.
- 3 Bowden 2003, 73.
- 4 Purcell 1987.
- 5 See documentary sources such as Varro's *Res Rusticae* (2nd book) and also Hatzfeld, *Trafiqants*, 62–4. Epirote sheep were apparently known for their size and quality. See also Winniffrith 2002.
- 6 Strabo 7.7.3 C322, 7.7.6 C325 and 7.7.9 C327.
- 7 Caes., *B. Civ.* 4.3.11 and 12; cited by Cabanes 1997, 126. The conflict is said to have brought significant hardship to the region, unable to support two armies of this size.
- 8 See Deniaux 2007, 33–9; Purcell 1987, 75.
- 9 Bescoby *et al.* 2008; Bowden 2003.
- 10 See Hodges 2011b.
- 11 See Bescoby 2006.
- 12 See Doukellis 1998; Petropoulos and Rizakis 1997; Hoskins-Walbank 1997; and Romano 2003. The original study also identified a smaller, but still statistically significant, number of alignments conforming to a smaller grid made up of 12×16 *actus* squares following the same orientation. This division was less easy to assign although it could be suggested that its less-prominent survival means it pre-dates the more ubiquitous 20×20 *actus* grid, belonging to a Caesarian organisation of the landscape, or an even more ancient scheme – see Boyd and Jameson 1981.
- 13 See, for example, Aquileia in Duora and Roberto 2010; Dilke 1962 on Roman surveying; and Campbell 1996.
- 14 Here, along the northeasterly margins of the plain opposite the main settlement at Butrint, this reflects a significantly more estuarine environment, as deduced from palaeo-environmental research, along with the likely course of the river systems flowing into the valley. For a fuller description of the palaeogeography of Butrint during this period, see Bescoby 2013.
- 15 The aqueduct itself (which dates from the late 1st century BC) runs more or less in a straight line from Xarra. Upon entering the settlement, however, it deviates to the east to align with the centuriation grid.
- 16 This change in emphasis is seen in the phases of the outlying 1st-century villa currently under investigation by the Butrint Training School, which had developed into a large family mausoleum by the 3rd century.
- 17 See Leppard 2013.
- 18 De Maria and Gjongecaj 2007.
- 19 De Maria and Gjongecaj 2003; Giorgio 2000.
- 20 Giorgio 2000.
- 21 Wilson 2013.
- 22 Bowden 2003; Doukellis 1998; Purcell 1990, 15; Stein 2001.
- 23 See Bowden 2003, 75.
- 24 Alcock 1993.
- 25 Bowden 2003, 67.
- 26 See Campbell 1996.

3 Early Imperial period: 1st and 2nd century AD – The archaeology and growth of a suburban settlement

Simon Greenslade

Introduction

This chapter describes the excavations of the earliest occupation phases encountered across the site. It will cover the period from the mid-1st century AD, when the initial settlement appears to have been laid out, and will then detail the 2nd-century expansion of the suburb up to the mid-3rd century, when the nature of the occupation changes with the construction of a large suburban townhouse.

Due to the complex nature and longevity of occupation upon the Vrina Plain site, these early phases were only discovered either in areas where it was physically possible to get below the later Roman and post-Roman buildings, such as in the courtyard of the Phase 3a *domus*, or where the earlier structures had been incorporated into later buildings. In the case of the former this allows for a detailed description of the evidence; in the case of the latter a more discursive description will be presented.

Phase 1: mid-1st to early 2nd century AD (Fig. 3.1, Plate 3.1)

The roads

At the eastern end of the site the intersection of three roads was discovered (Fig. 3.2). These roads were arranged in a regular, grid-like manner, with buildings set on either side. The central road was aligned east–west. The road was 2.57 m wide and its surface (149/7333/7208) was made up from a compacted gritty deposit mixed with crushed shell fragments laid over a mid-greyish-brown silt clay (7334/7207/7211) (Fig. 3.3). Ceramics dating from the early 1st century AD were recovered pressed into the surface of the road, as well as from the underlying foundation layers.

The northern edge of the road was defined by a series of seven regularly placed piers (150, 3064, 3438, 7359, 7036, 7356 and 7357) thought to have been an offshoot, *diverticulum*, of the aqueduct leading from Xarra into Butrint (Fig. 3.4). Its southern edge was formed by a 1 m

Table 3.1. Overview of the development of the Vrina Plain settlement: Phases 1–2

Phase	Date	Summary
1	Mid-1st–early 2nd century	Initial occupation: road system and number of large, well-appointed houses constructed, some incorporating shops fronting the roads
2	2nd–early 3rd century	Development expands: large cistern and series of new houses built. Some of earlier buildings altered

wide dark-orange mortar raft (7353) which seems to have been the foundation of a pavement that potentially ran along the southern edge of the road, directly up against the façade of a contemporary building (Building 4; see Fig. 3.3). A pavement would have been necessary along this side of the road as it appears, due to the positioning and width of a number of doorways along the northern façade of Building 4, that shops were originally located here.

The road was traced from the eastern trench edge to the west for c. 16.30 m, at which point it turned to the south and ran along the western edge of Building 4, where further wide doorways indicate that shops would also have fronted onto this road. Only a small part of the western edge of this road surface was revealed (7339), although it must be assumed that the possible pavement seen along the northern side of Building 4 (7353) would have continued along the eastern side of the road to provide access to the eastern shops. The western edge of this road was defined by a north–south-aligned wall (7360), the northern end of which was built up against the side of the westernmost pier of the aqueduct offshoot (7357). At this end of the wall a doorway (1.96 m wide) was situated roughly central to

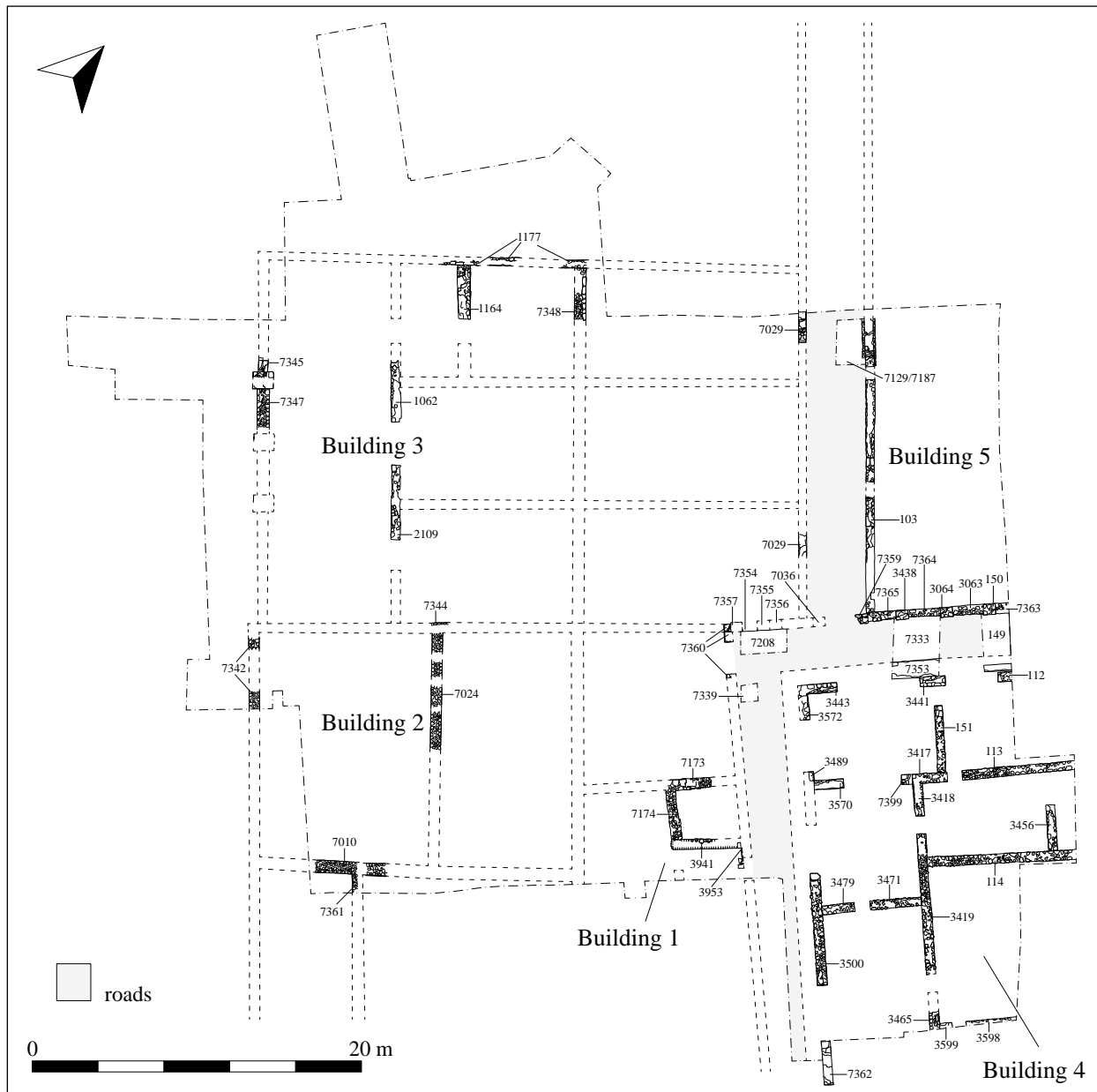


Figure 3.1. The Vrina Plain settlement showing areas of activity in Phase 1 (mid-1st to early 2nd century)

the east–west road that would have allowed access to the buildings beyond (Buildings 1 and 2) (Fig. 3.5).¹

To the east of this junction a third road (7129/7187), aligned north–south and similarly fronted by various buildings, was located. Wall 7029 defined the western side of the road with wall 103 forming the eastern edge (Fig. 3.6). No evidence of a pavement was found along this road, implying no doorways fronted onto it. At the southern end of the road the piers 7036 and 7359 of the aqueduct offshoot partially encroached on to it, restricting access slightly, the space between these piers being only 1.85 m. This road seems to have provided access to the Vivari Channel and possibly a crossing point located here.²

The buildings

Across the site various elements of several buildings have been located. To distinguish them they have been numbered 1 to 5 (see Fig. 3.1). These buildings can be grouped into three areas, with Buildings 1–3 located along the western side of the site, Building 4 at the southeast corner and Building 5 at the northeast corner. It would seem that the western buildings were divided into two separate plots by an east–west-aligned wall (7344), with Buildings 1 and 2 situated in the southern plot and Building 3 in the northern plot. Wall 7344 had largely been levelled prior to the construction of the 3rd-century *domus*, yet the eastern end of this wall is thought to have abutted the northern side of the doorway that fronted onto the main east–west roadway of the suburb.

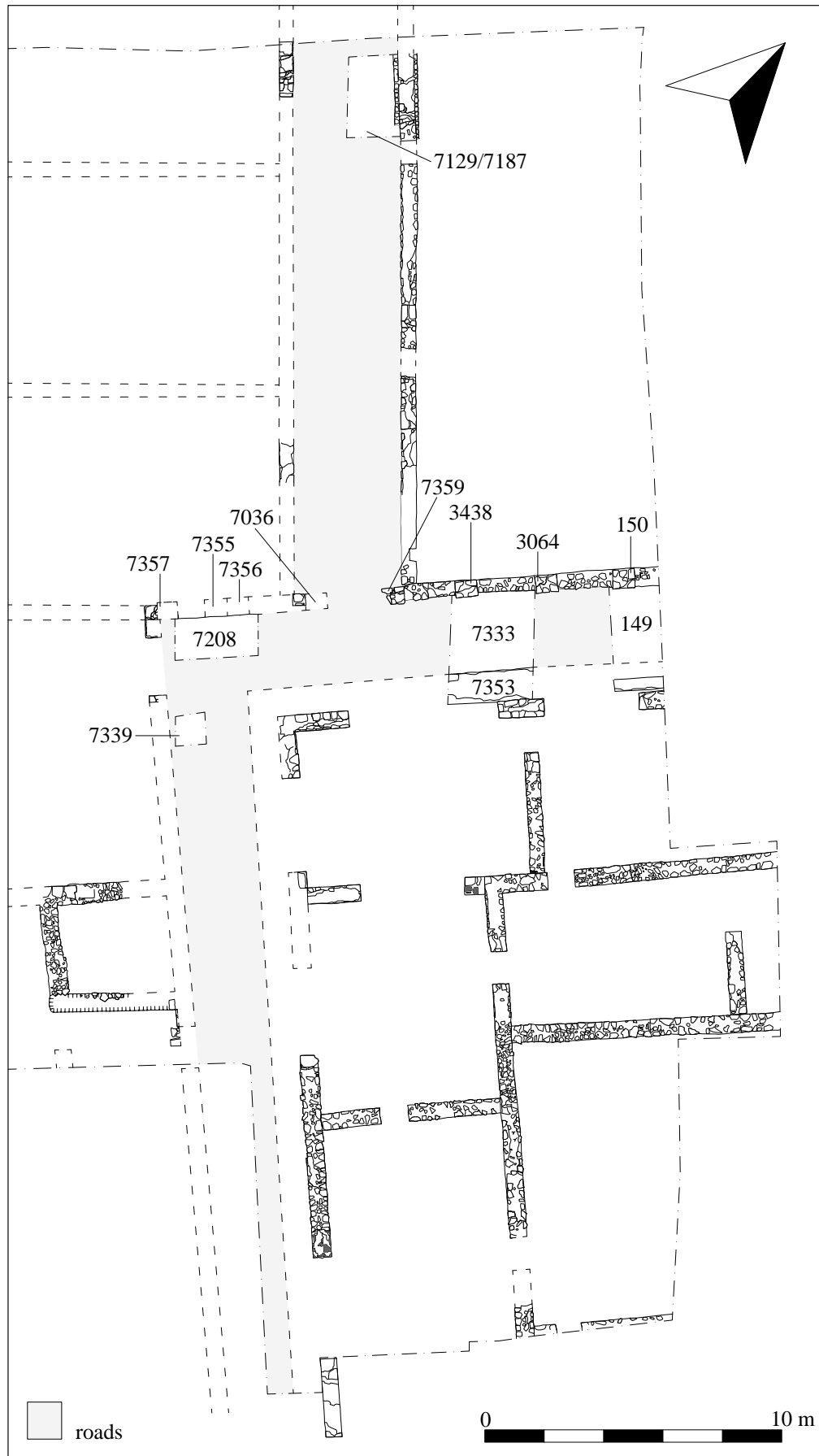


Figure 3.2. Plan of the eastern roads of the suburb and the surrounding buildings



Figure 3.3. View looking west along the central road, showing the surface 149/7333, the piers of the diverticulum and the mortar raft 7353 (1 m scale)

The Western Buildings: the southern plot

BUILDING 1

This structure was located along the eastern edge of the plot. Due to the low water table at the time of digging it was possible to record a full stratified sequence for the building, including deposits that predated its construction.

The earliest deposit encountered was a light-grey coarse sandy gravel (7171), roughly 1.80 m below the present ground surface (Fig. 3.7). This deposit covered an area approximately 2.50×1.30 m and appears to be a layer of re-deposited natural gravels.

Overlying this was a light-grey silt (7170) 0.07 m thick, containing a large amount of crushed shell mixed through it. The eastern edge of this layer was truncated by a north–south linear cut (7180) (0.55 m wide by 0.10 m deep), the profile of which had steep sides and a flat base suggesting it may have been a beam slot. The cut was traced for c. 1.30 m, although its full extent is unclear as to the north it was truncated by the southern wall of the later 6th-century basilica (3275), while to the south it was truncated by wall 7174.³ The limited extent exposed of this cut makes interpretation difficult; however, it is tempting to speculate that it may be associated with the first attempts at colonising the Vrina Plain, the slot possibly representing part of the foundation for a wall of a small farmhouse built by the first settlers who established themselves on the plain in

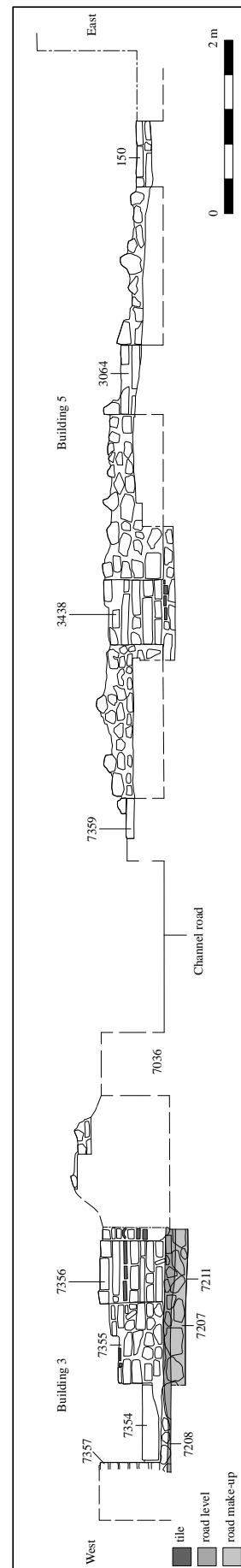


Figure 3.4. South-facing elevation of the piers of the diverticulum and the blocking walls between them



Figure 3.5. The doorway at the northern end of wall 7360 with the later Phase 7 wall 3299 over the top of it (1 m scale)

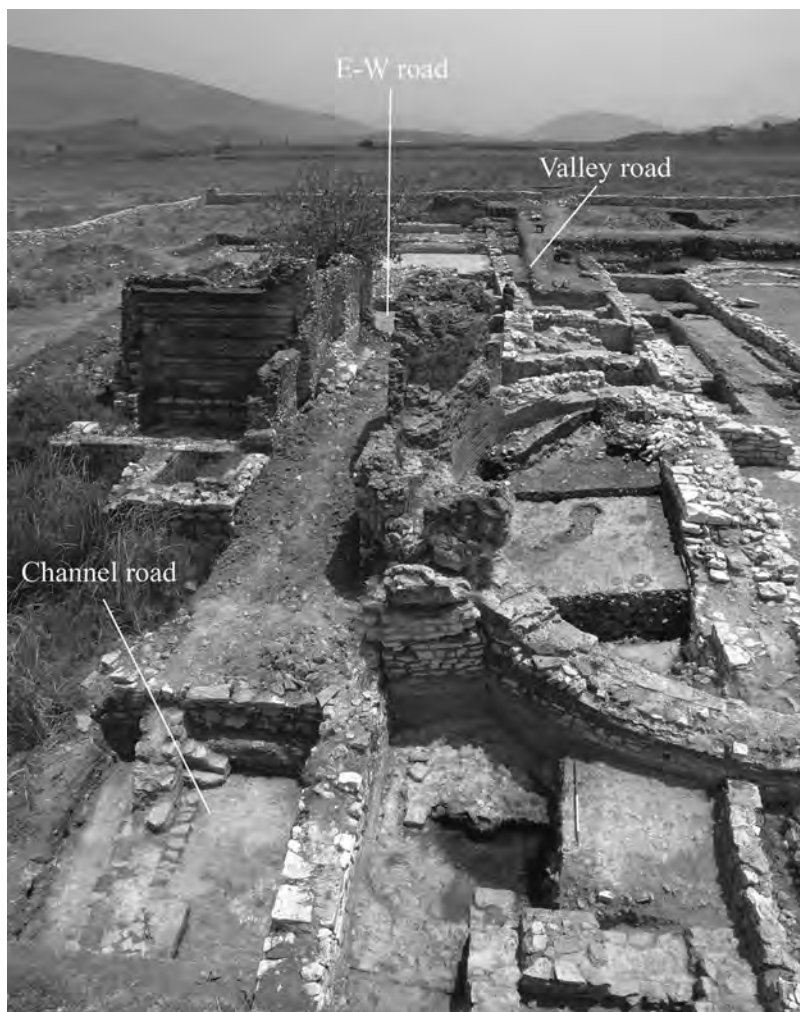


Figure 3.6. View looking down the valley showing the position of the three roads

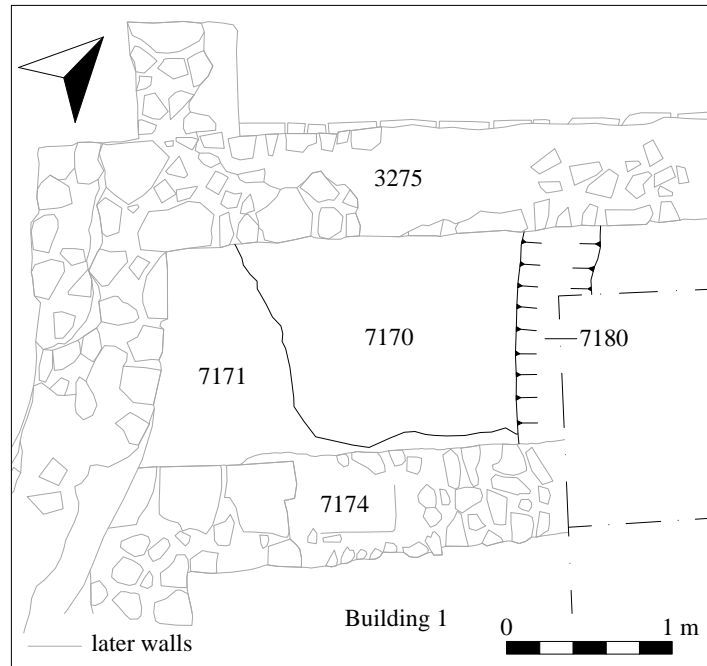


Figure 3.7. Detail of the features pre-dating Building 1



Figure 3.8. Plan of Building 1, with location of section shown in Fig 3.12



Figure 3.9. Building 1, looking north (1 m and 2 m scales). The earlier features pre-dating Building 1 shown in Figure 3.7 can be seen beyond the northern wall of Building 1

this period. Infilling the cut was a mid-greyish-green mixed silty sand/clay (7179). Ceramics dating from the mid-1st century AD were recovered from this deposit, including a fragment of an Italian *sigillata* (ITS) dish with an appliqué of the bearded god Selenus wearing a petasus hat.⁴

Following the infilling of cut 7180, Building 1 was constructed (Fig. 3.8). Parts of at least three rooms were revealed, despite the limited area of excavation due to the later constructions covering them. The northern room was defined by wall 7174, a right-angled wall measuring 3.05 m north-south by 2.35 m east-west. Built in to a construction cut (7285) and subsequently backfilled with a light-grey coarse sand (7286), the walls, which today survive only at foundation level, were constructed with limestone fragments bonded with a mixed pale-yellow mortar (Fig. 3.9). At the western end of the east-west wall, three large cut limestone blocks ($0.40 \times 0.42 \times 0.18$ m in size) survived along the wall's northern face. To the east of these blocks the wall had been robbed to a lower level

(cut 7173), but despite this impressions in the surviving mortar foundations indicate that other, similarly cut stones had been placed along this northern face to form the main façade of the building.

The southern wall of the room was indicated by wall 3941. Although much of this wall had been removed by robber trench 3934, some surviving fragments of the wall were found along the northern side of the cut as well as at the eastern end of it, where a single block was located below the later Phase 3a wall 3850. As with the northern and western walls of this building, wall 3941 had been built in a construction cut (3957), the later robber trench having directly followed the line of it.

Internally the room measured 3.18×3.32 m. One of the earliest deposits encountered within it was a light-grey coarse sand (7282) (0.12 m thick), situated in the western corner of the room. Covering an area 1.70×0.85 m, this layer seems to represent up-cast dug out from the construction cut of the building and subsequently spread

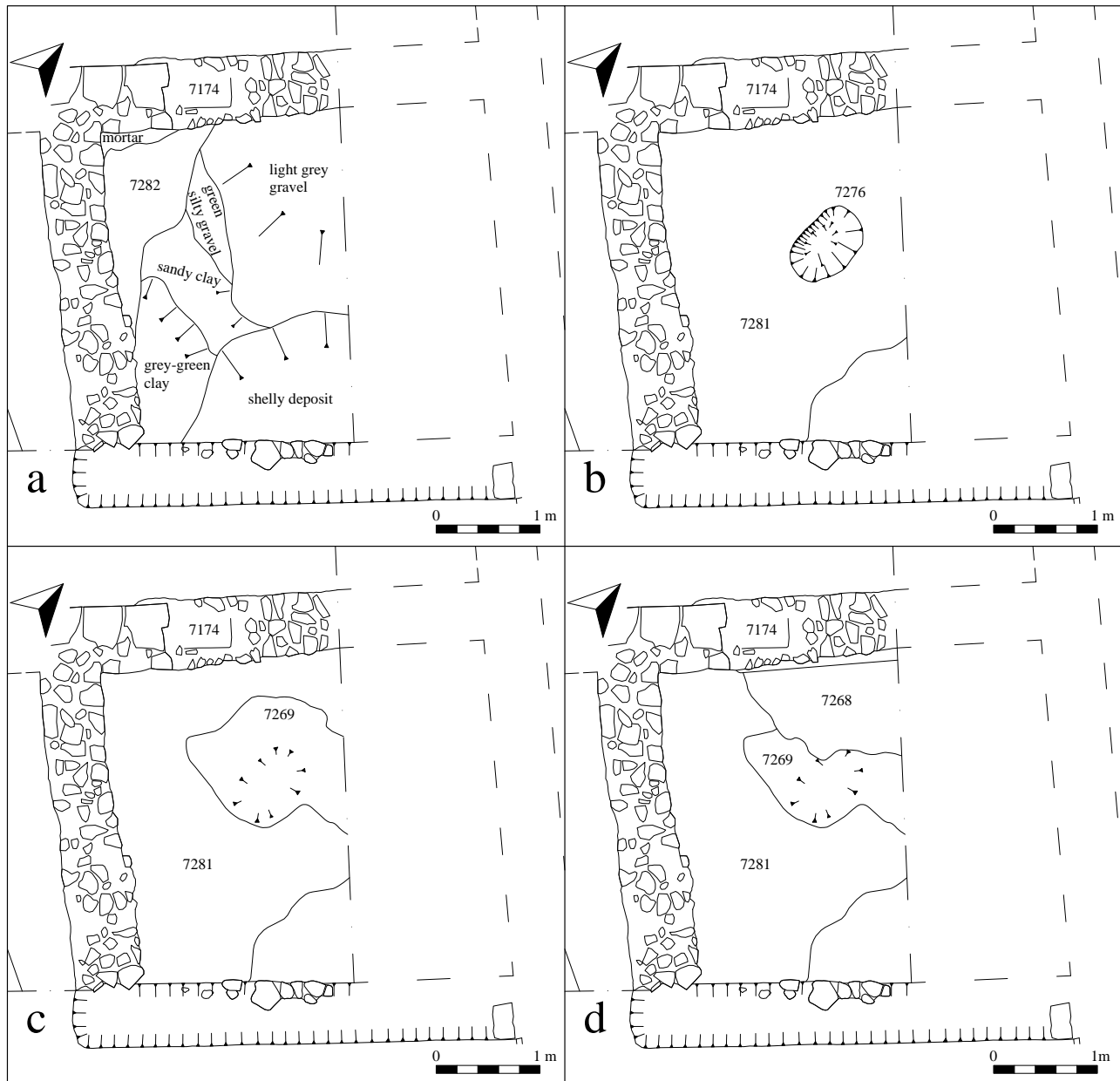


Figure 3.10. Plan of the sequence of deposits found beneath the floor of the northern room of Building 1

across the interior of the room to create a level surface for the internal space (Fig. 3.10a).⁵ A lip of mortar from wall 7174 was found partially covering deposit 7282, indicating that the building was constructed from this level. Ceramics of mid- to late 1st-century date were recovered from 7282.

Overlying this initial levelling layer was a mid-greenish-grey silty clay (7281) (Fig. 3.10b). This layer covered the entire internal space of the room. Due to the undulating nature of the underlying deposits, 7281 varied in thickness, though its upper surface appeared to be fairly level suggesting that this deposit was laid down to bring the internal space up to a consistent height. The deposit contained ceramics dated to the late 1st/early 2nd century AD.

A small oval pit (7276) (0.78×0.50 m and 0.28 m deep)

was cut through 7281 (Fig. 3.10b). Infilling this feature was a mid-grey coarse sandy silt (7275) which contained a large amount of 1st-century AD ceramics along with some animal bone, charcoal flecks and tile and limestone fragments. The cutting of the pit and subsequent backfilling is thought to have occurred very quickly, suggesting that the pit was dug deliberately to take this occupation refuse. Sealing the fill 7275 and partially infilling a hollow caused by the underlying pit was 7269, a dark-grey irregular-shaped patch of clayey-silt ($1.50 \times 1.25 \times 0.12$ m thick) (Fig. 3.10c). This deposit is dated by ceramics to the early to late 1st/early 2nd century AD and is thought to be a dump of occupation waste associated with the construction of the building. In turn 7269 was partially covered by a layer of compacted mid-greyish-green silty coarse sand (7268) (1.45×0.90



Figure 3.11. The western face of wall 3953 seen below the eastern stylobate wall (3850) of the Phase 3a domus (1 m scale)

$\times 0.07$ m thick (Fig. 3.10d)). Following this, a mid-green silty clay (7261) (0.14 m thick) was spread across the room. Covering the entire internal space of the room, this layer appears to have been the foundation level for the room's floor. A mix of 1st-century AD ceramics was recovered from 7261, including a piece of an Italian *sigillata* (ITS) platter with the name CAMVRI stamped within a *planta pedis*.⁶

Only a small area of the building's southern room was revealed (c. 4.15×1.20 m) but despite this, part of the room's eastern wall (3953) could be seen partially surviving below the later wall 3850 (Fig. 3.11). Incorporated into the wall was a doorway. A large limestone block supported on a raft of limestone slabs seen protruding from the southern section and partially extending into the room is thought to represent the door's threshold. Originally the room had been covered by a thick (0.18 m), compact pale-yellow mortar (3940), into which limestone fragments had been set. However, in a subsequent phase (see below) the floor had been removed and now only survived as discrete patches of mortar along the northern edge of the room. Underlying the floor was a compact mid-green silty clay (3881), the composition of which matched that of 7261 seen in the northern room. As these levelling layers are thought to be contemporary, it may suggest a similar mortar surface to 3940 had originally floored the northern room too (Fig. 3.12).

The western room seems to have been an open courtyard. Located to the rear of the building a compacted layer of coarse sand and grit (3894) (70 mm thick) covered the area. Various fragments of limestone, several of which showed obvious signs of wear, had then been pressed into this layer to form the actual surface of the space. Initially the courtyard could be accessed from the southern room via a door in the northwest corner of the room (see Fig.

3.8). However, at some point this door was blocked-in by wall 3892 (Fig. 3.13). Aligned north–south, wall 3892 was 0.57 m wide and originally abutted the southwest corner of the earlier building. Only the lowest two courses of the wall survive, comprising an initial course of three large limestone blocks bonded with clay; smaller stones acting as infilling material were overlaid by a single limestone block, roughly faced on its inner eastern edge and mortared to the stones below.

BUILDING 2

This building was located to the west of Building 1, and was defined by walls 7010, 7024 and 7342, with the plot boundary wall 7344 forming the building's northern wall (Fig. 3.14). The walls measured 0.65 m wide and were all constructed in a similar style, using a mixture of rectangular and sub-rectangular limestone blocks, ranging in size from between 0.08×0.05 m to 0.30×0.22 m, bonded with a mid-yellowish-brown mortar. The larger stones formed the facing, while the smaller stones formed the core of the wall.

Internally the largest room exposed enclosed an area measuring 10.40×13.76 m. The room was floored with a greyish-white plaster (7102/7019/7343), 20 mm thick (Fig. 3.15). This had been spread over a bedding layer of yellowish-green silty sand (7175) that varied in thickness from 80 mm to 100 mm (Fig. 3.16). Beneath this was a compacted stone surface (7176), made from varying sizes of angular and sub-angular limestone pieces that had been laid across the room to form a firm foundation for the new floor (Fig. 3.17). This would have been necessary due to the soft nature of the underlying deposits as the room was situated on the eastern edge of a deep inlet channel off the Vivari Channel. The southern part of this foundation appeared to be fairly neat and level while towards the north it became more uneven. Although the surrounding walls survived

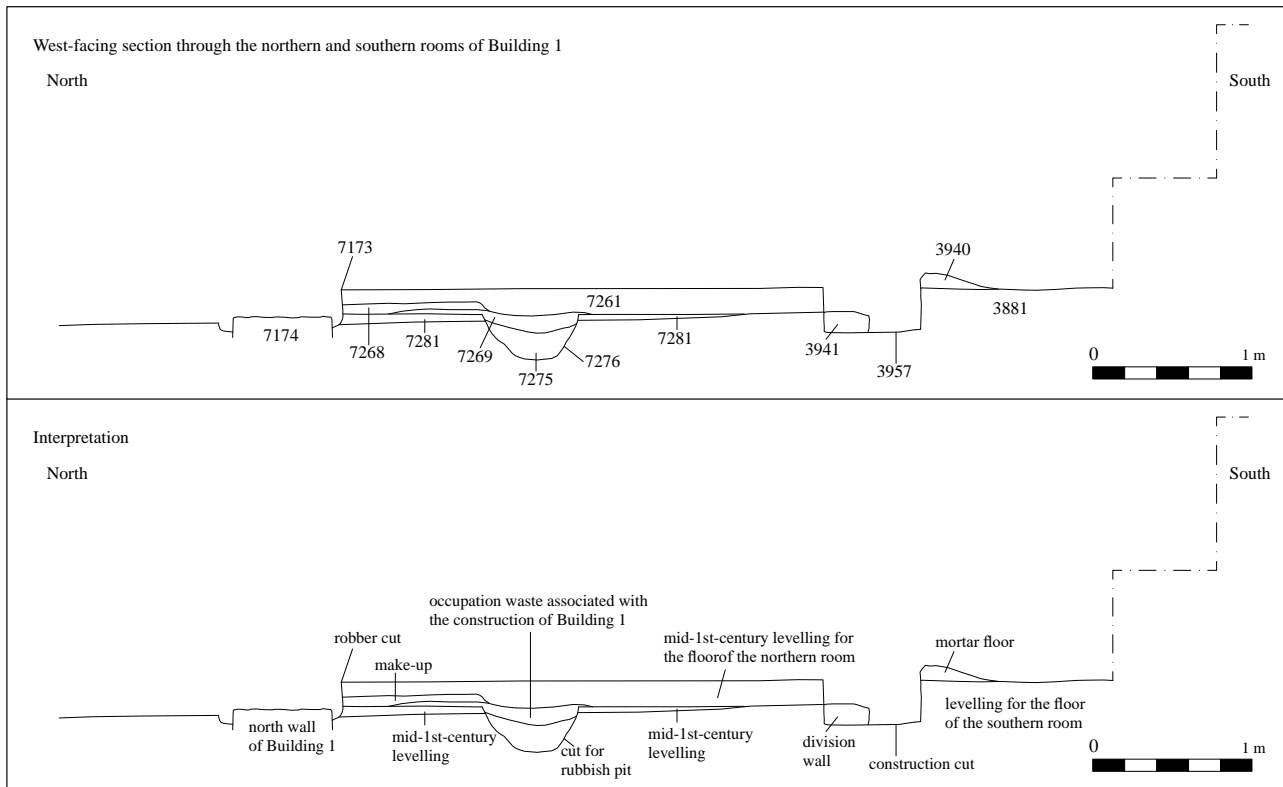


Figure 3.12. West-facing section across Building 1. See Fig. 3.8 for location



Figure 3.13. Building 1 following the blocking of the western doorway

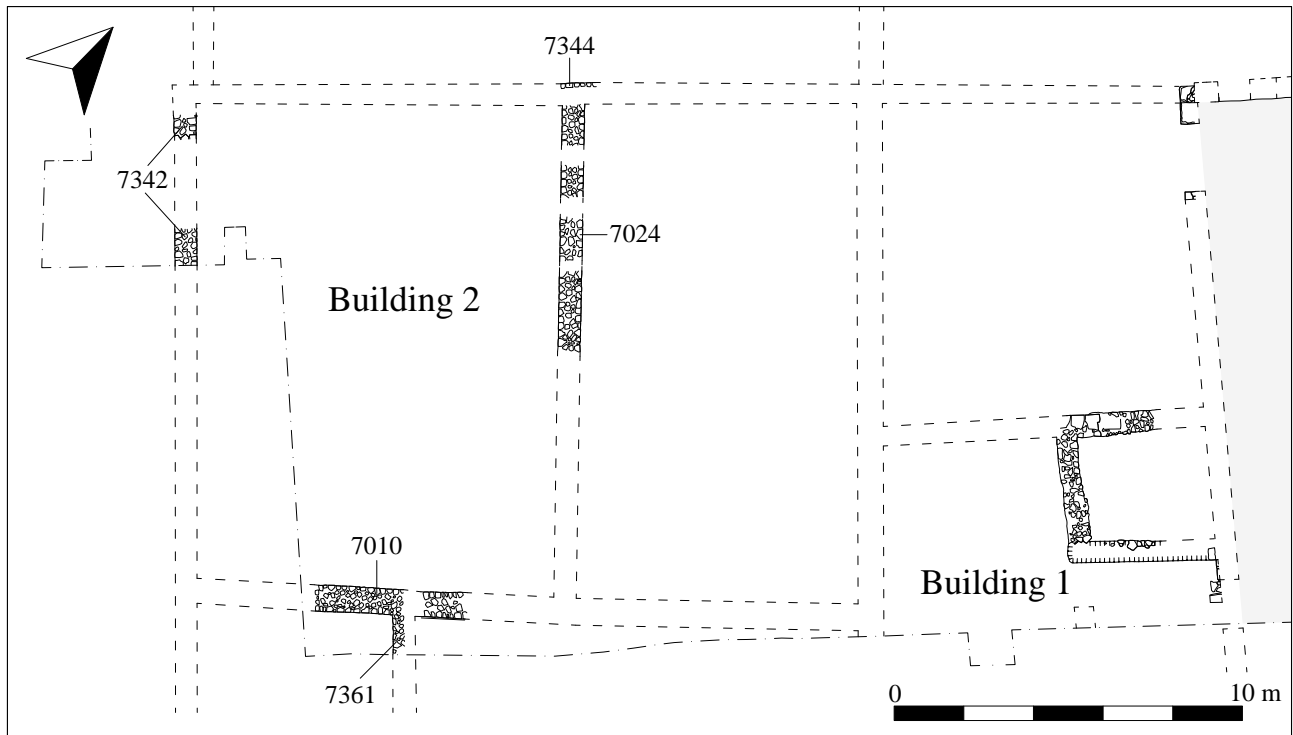


Figure 3.14. Plan of Building 2



Figure 3.15. The plaster floor 7102/7019/7343 and the underlying stone foundation layer 7176 exposed beneath the later buildings associated with the Phase 3a domus and Phase 7 basilica

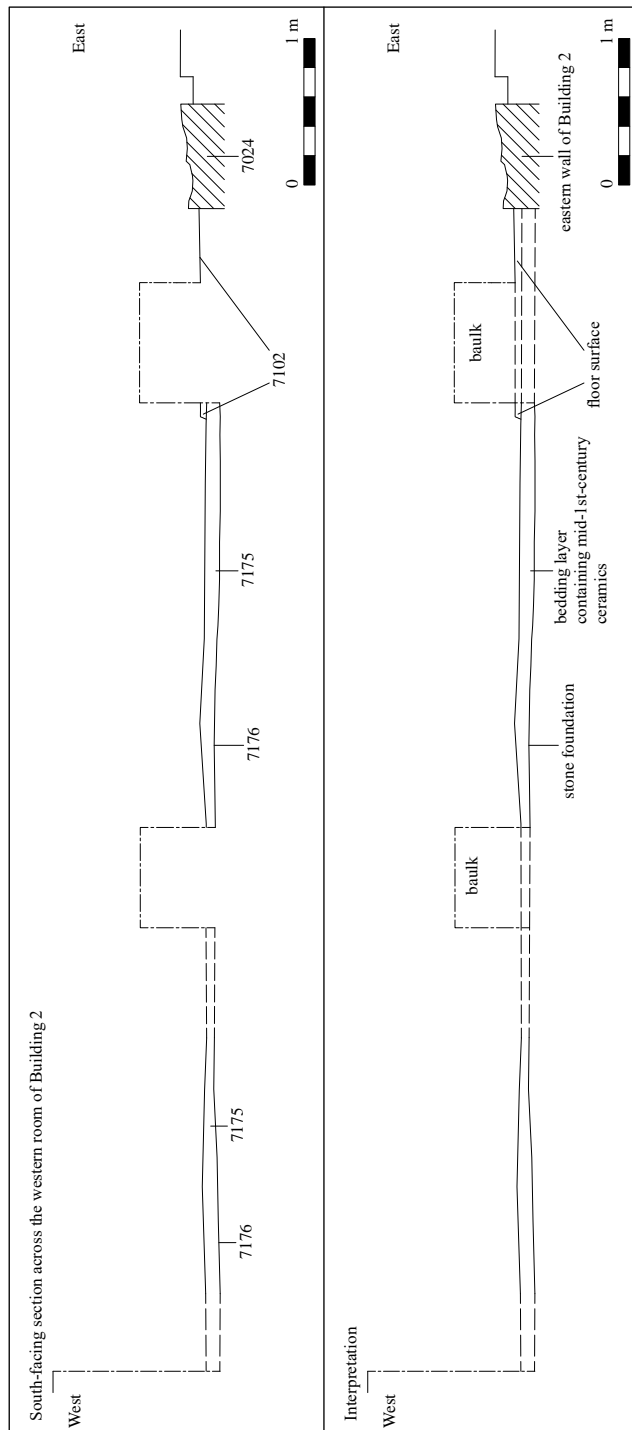


Figure 3.16. South-facing section across the western room of Building 2 showing the make-up levels (7176 and 7175) below the plaster floor (7102/7019/7343). See Fig. 3.15 for location

only to the height of the plaster floor 7102/7019/7343 it could be seen that a plaster render had been applied to all the walls prior to the floor being laid. Dating evidence for the construction of this new building is limited and relies solely on ceramics recovered from 7175; these have been dated to the mid-1st century AD.

The area to the south of wall 7010 was divided into at least two rooms, as indicated by wall 7361, the northern end of which was keyed into the southern face of wall 7010 (see Fig. 3.15). In the eastern room a rough surface of broken tiles was exposed (7008). The tiles appeared to have been laid in a random fashion, suggesting that rather than being the actual floor of the room, the tiles formed a foundation for a floor that had subsequently been removed. Below 7008 was a dark greenish-brown clay silt levelling layer (7009), which contained a large amount of crushed tile pressed into it. In the western room a similar sequence of a tile deposit overlying a greenish-brown clay silt deposit was located. Traces of wall plaster, including some painted red, were found on the exposed wall faces in both rooms.⁷

The Western Buildings: the northern plot

BUILDING 3

Only the western limit of this building was located, defined by two extremely well-built north–south-aligned walls (1062 and 2109/2267), separated by a large doorway (2.60 m wide) (Fig. 3.18). The northern wall (1062) measured 4.80×0.57 m, while the southern wall (2109/2267) measured 4.52×0.56 m. Both walls were built from squared and faced rectangular limestone blocks bonded in a yellowy-grey mortar (Fig. 3.19). As these walls were integral elements in later constructions in this area, they survived to almost 1 m in height, with six courses of walling still visible.

The southern end of Building 3 is thought to have been defined by the plot boundary wall 7344, located 5.25 m beyond the southern end of wall 2109/2267. The northern limit was unclear due to the construction of a bath-house associated with the 3rd-century *domus*, which was built over the northwestern corner of the building. Despite this, it is possible that the northern limit may have been formed by an east–west-aligned wall (1177) found in the preliminary drainage ditch excavations to the northeast of wall 1062 (Fig. 3.20). Built from a mixture of rough sub-angular and rectangular blocks of varying sizes and bonded with a yellowy-brown sandy mortar, stratigraphically wall 1177 formed the earliest feature uncovered in these trial excavations. Further excavations to the east of the drainage ditch found that this wall continued; so far it has been traced for c. 8.90 m.

The eastern end of Building 3 is unclear due to later buildings, but it is possible that it may have been defined by the roadside wall 7029. The main access to the building seems to have been gained from this end, via a doorway located between the westernmost piers of the *diverticulum* (7357) and the blocking wall 7355 (see Fig. 3.4). Although this doorway was later blocked-in during Phase 3 (see

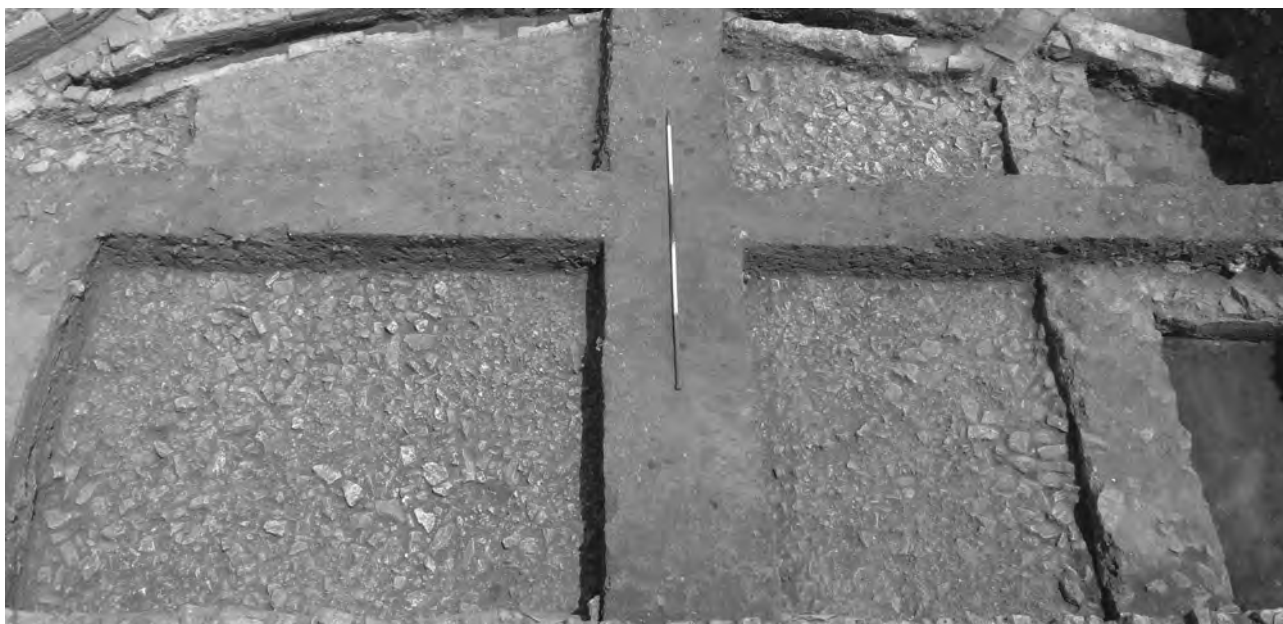


Figure 3.17. The compacted stone surface 7176 (2 m scale)

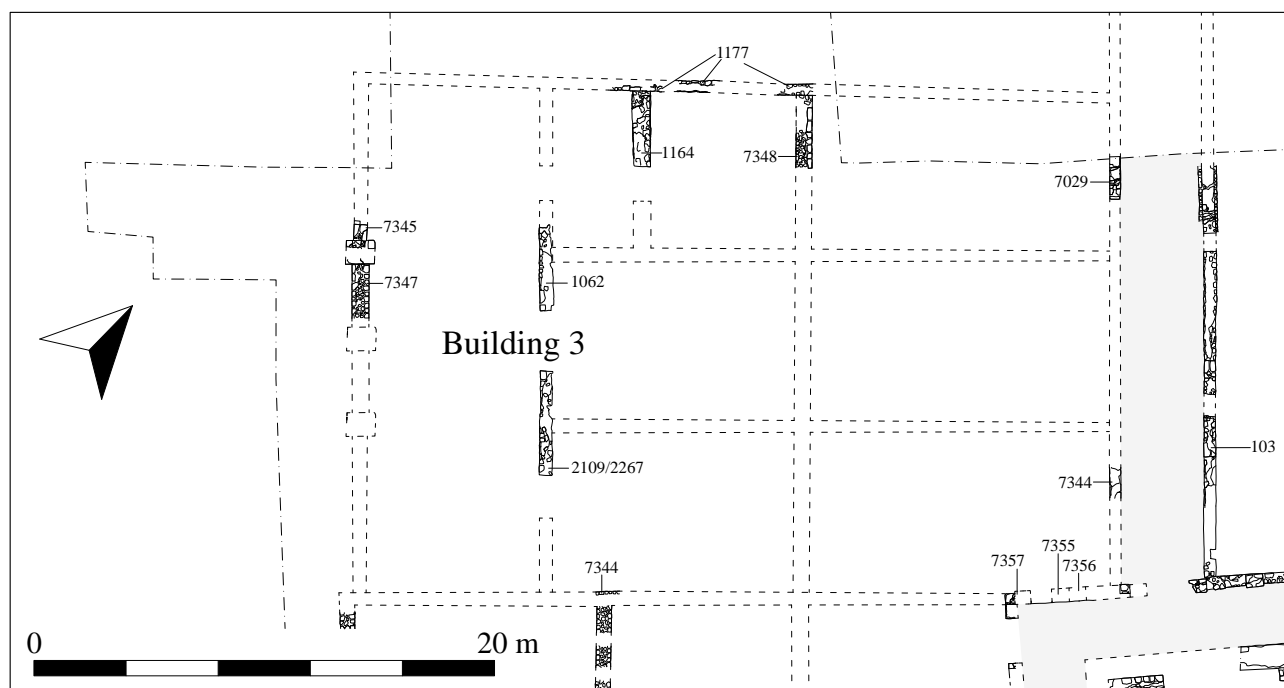


Figure 3.18. Plan of Building 3

Chapter 4), the threshold stone of the original Phase 1 door (7354) remained *in situ* beneath the later blocking wall.

Internally, although the area directly to the east of walls 1062 and 2109 could not be looked at in any great detail as subsequent rebuilds and associated changes in the levels had left virtually nothing of the early phases relating to these walls surviving in this area, two further early walls (1164 and 7348) were found abutting the southern edge of wall 1177 (see Fig. 3.18). The western wall (1164)

was 0.72 m wide and was constructed of large, unfaced limestone blocks with a broad stone rubble core bonded with a light yellowy-brown, pebbly/shelly mortar. To the east of this wall was a contemporary mortar floor surface (1169). Traces of plaster were found along the eastern face of the wall, the plaster stopping at the level of the floor. The eastern wall (7348) was located *c.* 6.30 m to the east of 1164. Despite wall 7348 being slightly narrower than wall 1164 (*c.* 0.70 m wide), its construction technique was

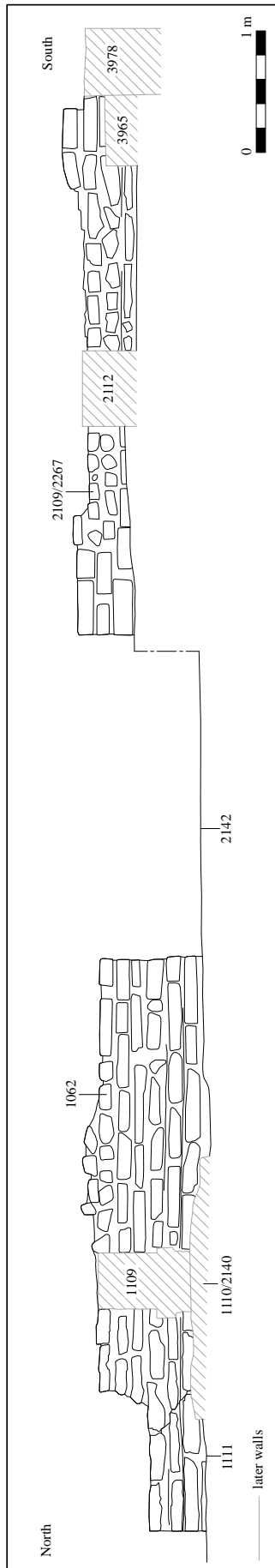


Figure 3.19. West-facing elevation of walls 1062 and 2109/2267



Figure 3.20. Wall 1177, looking west (2 m scale)

very similar and as such it is thought to be contemporary. The southern extent of wall 7348 was unclear as it had been truncated by the construction of Building 8, the northern wall of which (3136) had been built over the line of wall 7348, after the earlier wall had been dismantled prior to the construction of Building 8. To the west, rather than having been built over wall 1164, the northern wall of Building 8 (3136) appears to have been built up against the southern end of the earlier wall. If so, this may suggest that wall 1164 had originally ended at this point and that a doorway had existed here providing access to the room.

To the west of Building 3, a floor surface (1111/1115/2142) composed of small limestone and tile fragments along with patches of whitish-grey mortar seems to have been laid at the time walls 1062 and 2109 were built (Fig. 3.21). Only a small part of this floor was exposed to the west of the central doorway. However, at the base of a trench to the west of the southern end of wall 2109/2267, a light brownish-yellow deposit of compacted crushed mortar was encountered (7117) that appears to be a continuation of floor 1111/1115/2142. As the proposed plot boundary wall (7344) is 1.75 m to the south of the trench, it is assumed that the floor 7117 may have originally continued up to wall 7344, suggesting this area might have been an open space. The western limit of the open space, and with it Building 3, seems to have been defined by wall 7345. Incorporated into this wall was a doorway that would have allowed access to the shoreline and inlet channel beyond. Although only the northern side of this entrance was exposed beneath the later Phase 5 wall 2111/1109, it appears that the doorway was flanked by columns. This is indicated by a square foundation block *c.* 1 m wide that was built into wall 7345 and against which the threshold foundation (7347) of the doorway was constructed.⁸

Within a short period of time the southern end of this open space was altered when a right-angled wall, built with angular limestone blocks set within a distinct orangey-brown sandy mortar, was added (Fig. 3.22). Wall 3978 (5.75×0.55 m wide) formed the northern wall of the new structure, the eastern end of which abutted the southern limit of wall 2109/2267. Along the southern, inner face of wall 3978 traces of a construction cut

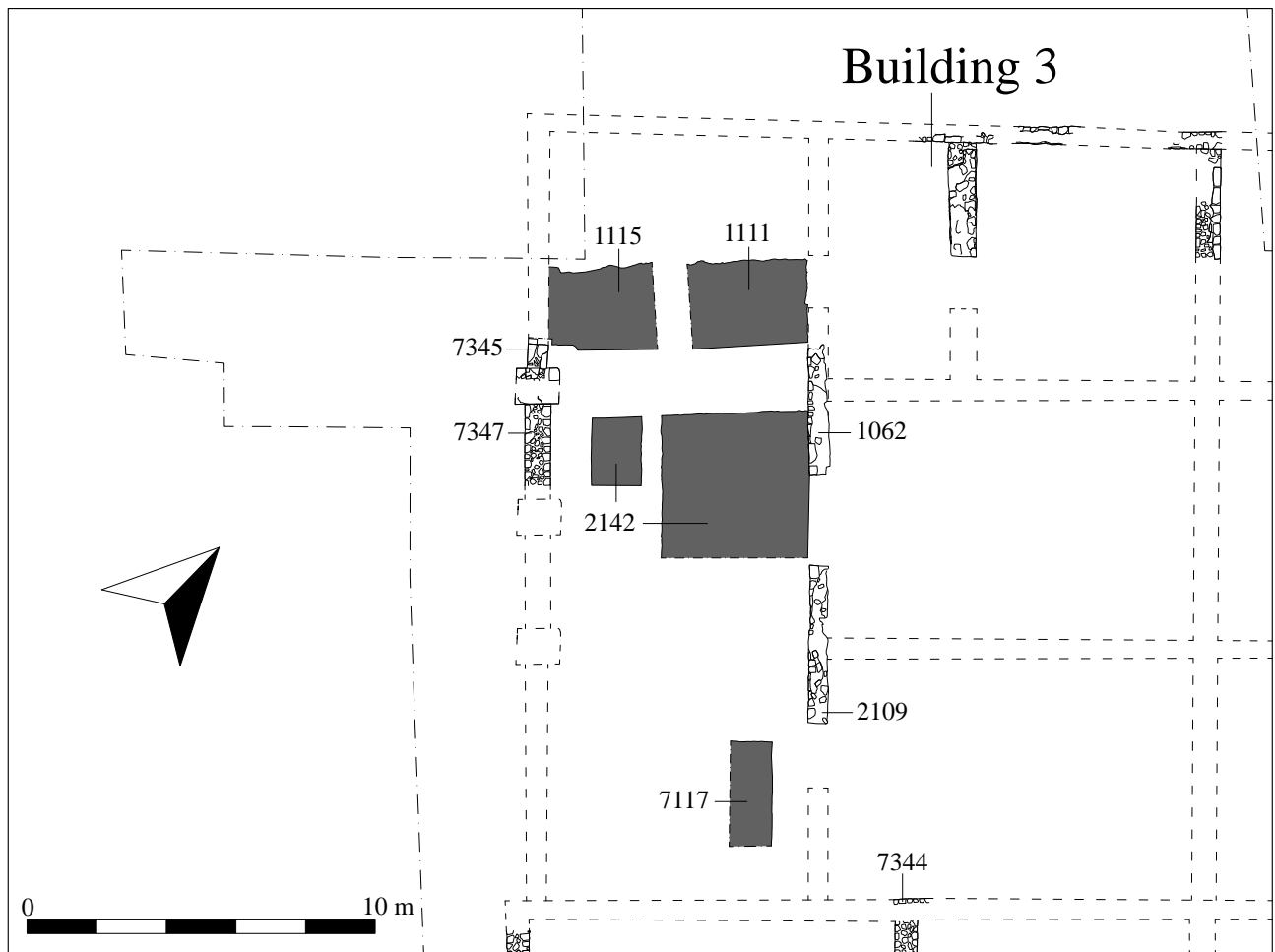


Figure 3.21. The western side of Building 3 showing the walls and associated features beneath the later buildings

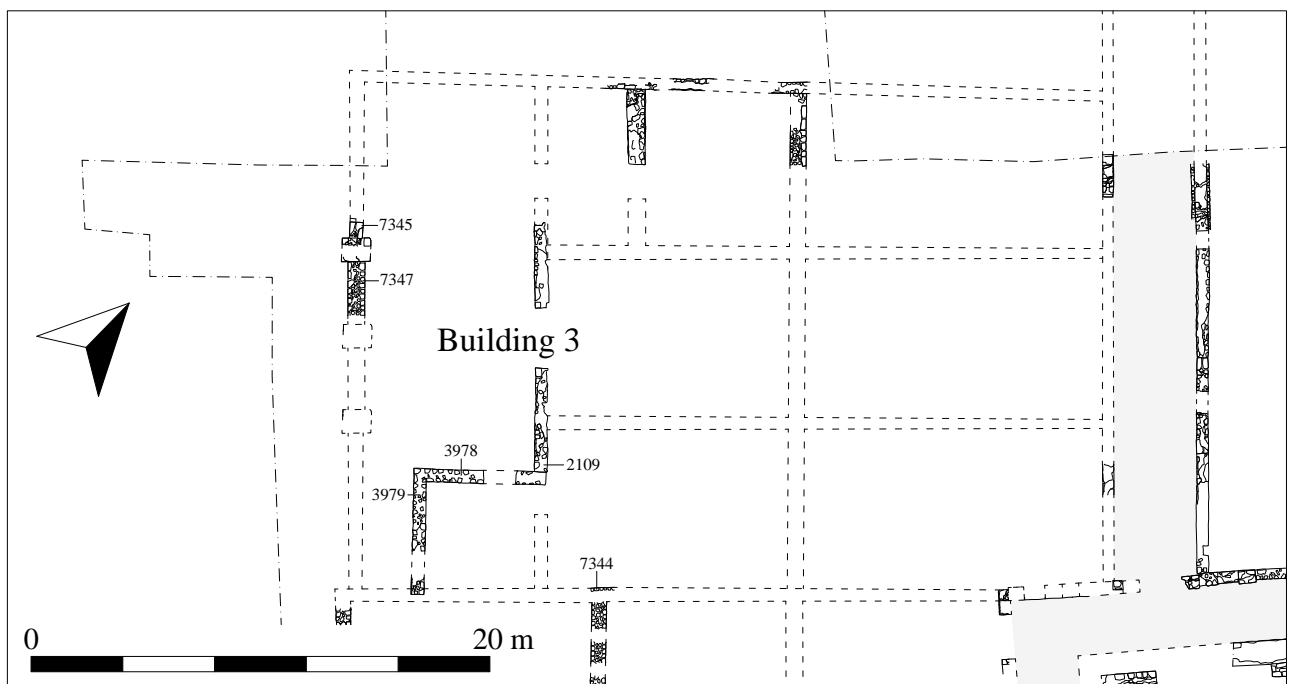


Figure 3.22. The altered plan of Building 3 following the construction of the room defined by walls 3978 and 3979

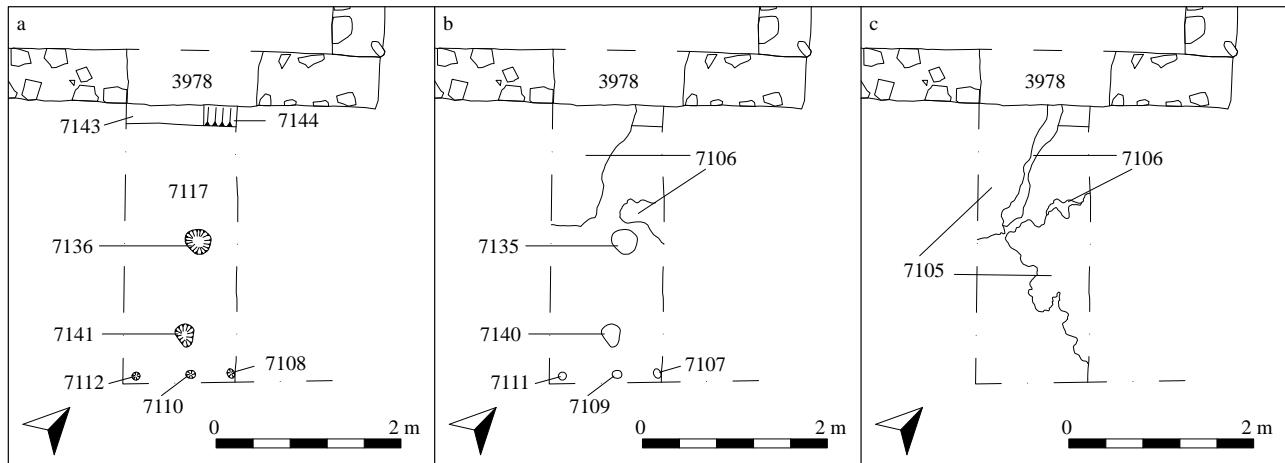


Figure 3.23. Plan of the features cutting floor 7117 within the small trench dug in room defined by walls 3978 and 3979

(7144) were found, extending 0.13 m south of the wall and cut through the earlier surface (7117). Infilling the cut was a light-grey deposit of a silty sandy-clay (7143). The western wall (3979) (5.50×0.55 m wide) is assumed to have abutted up against the plot boundary wall 7344.

Internally these walls enclosed an area measuring 4.75×5.35 m. Although only a small area of this room was excavated, a series of post- and stake-holes were found cut through 7117; these are thought to be associated with the construction of the room (Fig. 3.23a). At the southern end of the small trench, an east–west-aligned row of three very small stake-holes (0.09–0.13 m in diameter and roughly 0.10 m deep) were located (7108, 7110 and 7112). To the north of the central stake-hole (7110), a larger cut (0.25 m in diameter and 0.20 m deep) was found (7141) that is thought to have held a post. A cut (7136) for another post (0.27 m in diameter and almost 0.30 m deep) was found further to the north, roughly in the centre of the trench. Following the construction of the walls the posts were removed and backfilled. This seems to have occurred in the early 2nd century AD, as indicated by ceramics from 7135, the fill of post-hole 7136. Partially sealing these construction deposits were two thin layers of occupation debris (7106 and 7105) (Figs 3.23b and c). Located in the north-western corner and along the western side of the trench, these deposits produced ceramics dating to the mid-1st/first half of the 2nd century AD.

The Eastern Buildings

BUILDING 4

To the east of the site, the remains of at least seven rooms of a very substantial building have been found, Building 4 (Fig. 3.24). As with the western wall of Building 3, Building 4 survived due to the fact that it was incorporated into the later sequence of buildings that were constructed on the site (see Fig. 4.59). Only the northwest corner of this building has so far been excavated.

The northern wall of Building 4 comprised walls 112, 3441 and 3443. These walls were constructed with rectangular limestone blocks bonded with a yellowish-

white mortar and were separated from each other by a series of large entranceways (Fig. 3.25). Wall 112 was the most easterly part of the building exposed. Measuring 1.19×0.55 m wide, it survived to a height of 0.96 m and was separated from wall 3441 by a doorway 3.20 m wide. Wall 3441 formed the central part of the wall (1.54×0.55 m wide) and survived to 1.03 m in height. A very large doorway approximately 5.10 m wide was located between this wall and wall 3443, the northwestern corner of the building. Wall 3443 (2.41 m in length by 0.75 m in height) was slightly wider than walls 112 and 3441 at c. 0.60 m. Wall 3443 was built as a right-angle, the southern return of which was wall 3572 that extended 1.55 m to the south. Along with walls 3489 (3.72×0.62 m), 3500 (6.82×0.62 m) and 7362 (2.65×0.55 m), wall 3572 formed the western side of Building 4.⁹ As with the northern wall of this building, the western wall was also divided by a series of doorways. Between walls 3572 and 3489 was a doorway 3.15 m wide; between 3489 and 3500 the doorway was 2.95 m wide; and that between 3500 and 7362 measured 3.35 m.

Internally a contemporary wall was built to shadow the form of the outer build. The northern wall was formed by walls 113 and 3417, the two separated by a doorway 2.80 m wide. The eastern wall 113 was built from irregular-shaped limestone pieces with a single band of slightly smaller, more rectangular blocks placed half way up it. The wall measured between 0.52 m and 0.60 m wide and has been traced for 5.97 m; the eastern end of it continued beyond the limit of the excavation. Wall 3417 (2.10×0.60 m wide) was the northern corner of the wall and formed a right-angle with wall 3418, the southern return of it. Wall 3418 extended for 1.95 m, at which point a further doorway 1.10 m wide was located. The southern side of the doorway was formed by wall 3419. This wall, 0.60 m wide, extended for almost 8.55 m, at which point it had been damaged by the construction of a flue for a later hypocaust associated with the 3rd-century *domus* (see Chapter 4). To the south of this damage, c. 2.30 m beyond, the wall continued as 3465. It was exposed for 1.05 m and continued beyond the

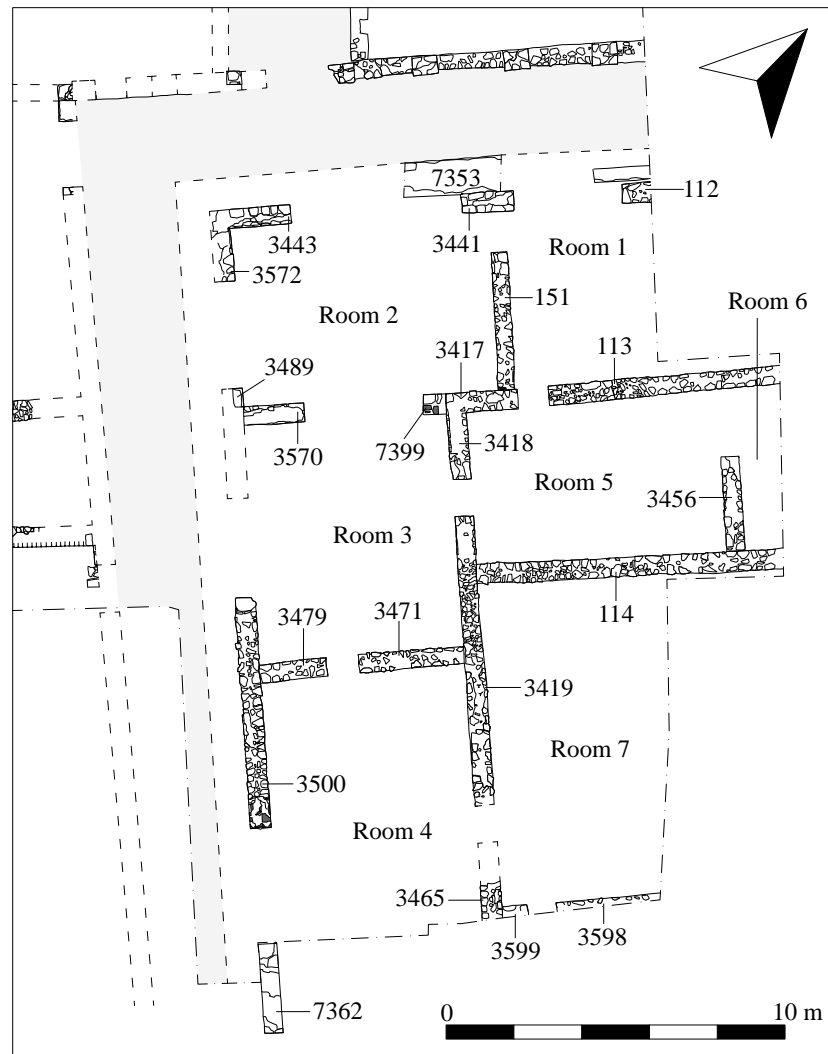


Figure 3.24. Plan of Building 4

southern limit of the excavation. When viewed from the west, the northern edge of wall 3465 appears almost vertical and this would seem to suggest that a further doorway may have been located here.

Following the construction of these walls, a series of partition walls was built to divide the enclosed space up into a number of separate, yet interconnected rooms: Rooms 1–4 (see Fig. 3.24). The northern side of the building was divided by wall 151. This wall was built just to the west of the eastern end of wall 3417 and sub-divided the area into two rooms: Room 1 to the east and Room 2 to the west. Aligned north–south, wall 151 (5.30 × 0.48 m) was built from a mix of irregular and sub-rectangular limestone blocks bonded with a white mortar. The wall stopped 1.20 m from the southern side of wall 3441, indicating the position of a doorway which allowed access between the two northern rooms. A 1 × 1 m sondage in the northwest corner of the room revealed that it had initially been levelled over with a mixed greenish-brown clay silt (7337) *c.* 0.28 thick. Overlying this was a green clay (7336) 0.18 m thick. Both these

deposits contained Late Republican material (late 2nd/early 1st century BC) mixed within them.

Along the western side of the building, the northernmost division wall was defined by walls 3570 and 7399. Aligned east–west, wall 3570 (1.80 × 0.50 m) was located 0.55 m south of the northern end of wall 3489, while the smaller wall 7399 (0.70 × 0.60 m) was constructed against the western corner of the inner wall 3417/3418. A doorway *c.* 3.50 m wide existed between the two walls, allowing access between Room 2 to the north and Room 3 to the south. To the south, a further division wall was built formed by walls 3479 and 3471. Abutting the eastern face of wall 3500, wall 3479 (*c.* 2 × 0.55 m) was constructed with rectangular and sub-rectangular limestone blocks bonded with a light yellowish-white mortar. The eastern part of the wall (3471) (3.10 × 0.55 m) was constructed in a similar manner to wall 3479 and abutted the western face of wall 3419. A doorway 0.95 m wide separated the two walls and provided access from Room 3 to the southernmost room exposed, Room 4.

The area to the east of wall 3419 was also divided

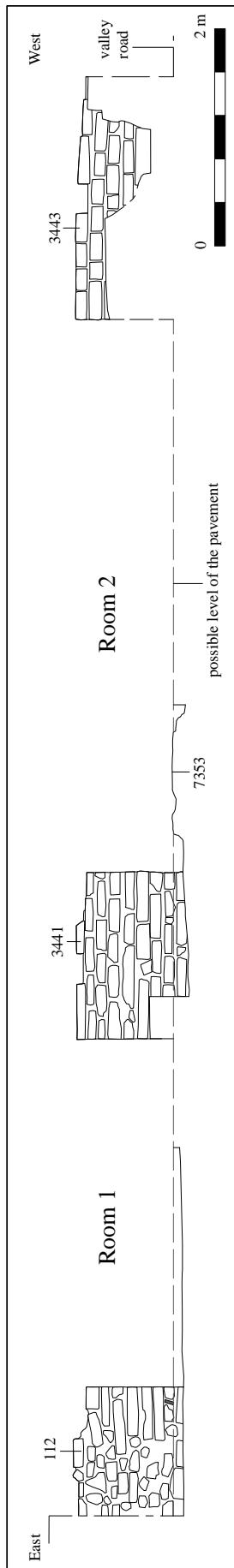


Figure 3.25. Elevation of the northern wall of Building 4 showing the entrances into Rooms 1 and 2

by a series of walls, creating further rooms (Rooms 5–7) that are thought to be contemporary with the western rooms (see Fig. 3.24). Located 1.45 m south of the northern end of wall 3419, abutting its eastern face, was wall 114, an east–west-aligned wall measuring 9.05×0.56 m. Constructed with sub-rectangular and irregular stones (varying in size from between $0.20 \times 0.19 \times 0.18$ m to $0.10 \times 0.11 \times 0.10$ m), the wall was bonded with a light yellowish-white mortar with small pebble inclusions. The room created to the north of wall 114, Room 5, was accessed from Room 3 via the doorway between walls 3418 and 3419. Rather than being one large room, the space was sub-divided by the construction of a north–south aligned wall (3456) (2.80×0.52 m) built in a similar style to wall 114. A doorway 2 m wide between the northern end of wall 3456 and the southern face of wall 113 allowed access between Room 5, to the west, and Room 6 to the east. To the south, a further east–west-aligned wall (3599/3598) was built abutting the eastern face of wall 3465/3419. Wall 3599, measuring 0.75 m in length, lay to the west, while wall 3598, measuring 3.05 m, lay to the east; the latter’s eastern end continued beyond the limit of the excavation. These two walls were separated by a doorway 0.85 m wide that formed the only visible means of access to the space south of wall 114, Room 7.

While the interpretation of the other contemporary buildings across the site is difficult, due to the limited areas exposed, a tentative suggestion for the role of Building 4 can be put forward. Situated at the intersection of the three roads, it is tempting to interpret the rooms that front onto the roads as shops of some kind, with an open courtyard set behind them. The positioning of the corner room (Room 2) with entrances along both its northern and western walls, the northern of which was over 5 m wide, may suggest this space could have been a *tabernium*, a regular feature of any Roman townscape.

BUILDING 5

To the north of Building 4 a further series of walls was located that appears to delineate the western and southern extent of another structure that formed part of the initial settlement, Building 5 (Fig. 3.26). Wall 103 formed the western wall of the complex and was traced for almost 18 m. Towards its southern end the impressions of two windows were found that would have looked out onto the channel road beyond (Fig. 3.27).¹⁰ The southern wall of the building was formed by the eastern piers of the *diverticulum* (150, 3064, 3438 and 7359), and the blocking walls (7363, 3063, 7364 and 7365) subsequently built between the piers (see Fig. 3.26).

Internally virtually nothing of the building survives due to the alterations that this area underwent in the following century when a cistern were constructed over the plot. However, evidence from the sides of a robbed-out pier of the cistern (cut 30) did identify a series of early deposits and floor layers which are assumed to relate to the original building as they were sealed by a floor (25) associated with the cistern. The earliest deposit revealed was a make-up level of fragmentary tiles set in mortar (64) (Fig. 3.28). Covering the base of the robbed-out pier, this deposit was thought to have been the foundation for a pavement, perhaps of stone slabs, that had subsequently been removed. Overlying this was a light greyish-brown silt (65) (0.15 m thick) that appears to have been the make-up deposit for the next floor surface (66), a rough *cocciopesto* floor some 0.15 m thick.

Further circumstantial evidence for the prior occupation of this southeastern plot was also observed in the Phase 3b bath-house to the north. The mortar sub-floor (80) of what was designated as Room F by Crowson and Gilkes had subsided in two places, while elsewhere within the room the floor appeared to have a solid foundation (see Fig. 4.102).¹¹ The differential survival was put down to the fact that where the floor had subsided it had collapsed into underlying features while the solid floor areas were laid over pre-existing walls or structures that had supported it. Although it is difficult to interpret these features properly without further excavation, there is the possibility they may demarcate a roadway. Elements of a road surface (1045/1046/1047) and associated wall (1087) were discovered

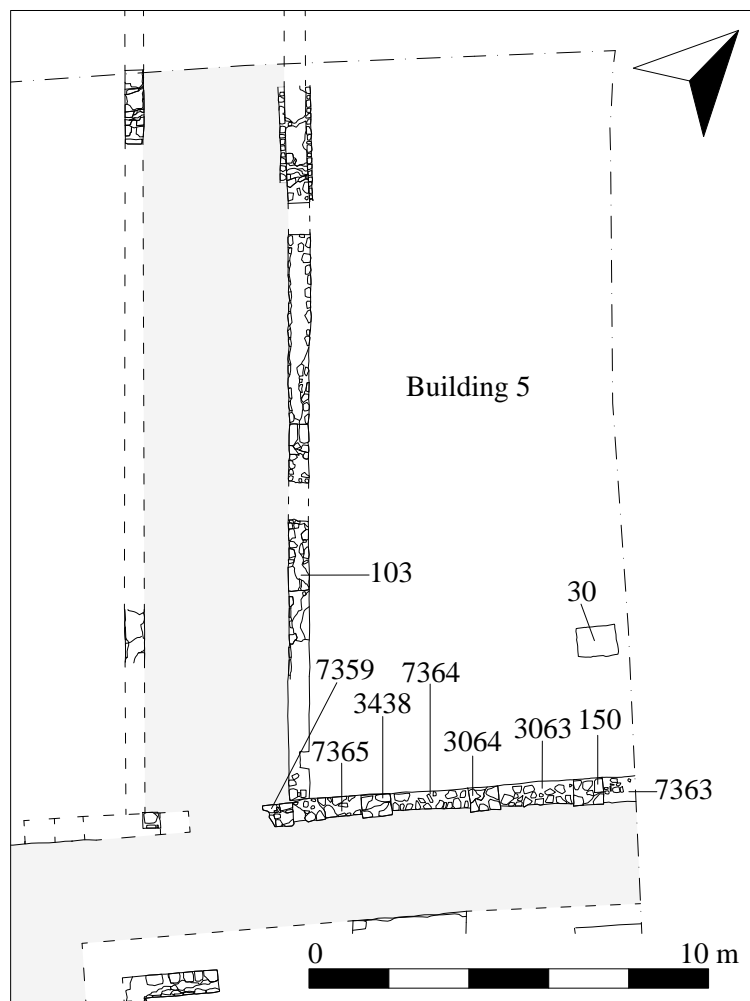


Figure 3.26. Plan of Building 5



Figure 3.27. The impressions of windows at the southern end of wall 103 of Building 5 within the core of the western wall of the Phase 2 (2nd to early 3rd century) cistern

to the east in the drainage ditch excavations, and if the alignment of wall 1087 is projected west it matches the southern collapse seen within Room F. Assuming the road was 3.55 m wide – the average width of the other roads known from the suburb – the position of the northern wall

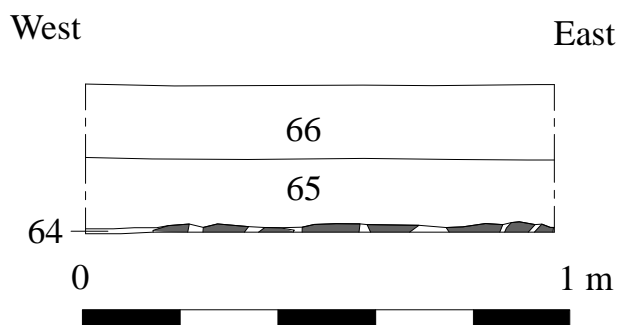


Figure 3.28. South-facing section through robber cut 30 showing the floor layers below the floor of the Phase 2 cistern

of the road also matches the second area of collapse in the room.¹²

The Southern Buildings

BUILDING 6

Further evidence of early occupation was found roughly 30 m to the south of Building 4 (Fig. 3.29), where a trial excavation exposed the southwest corner of a building

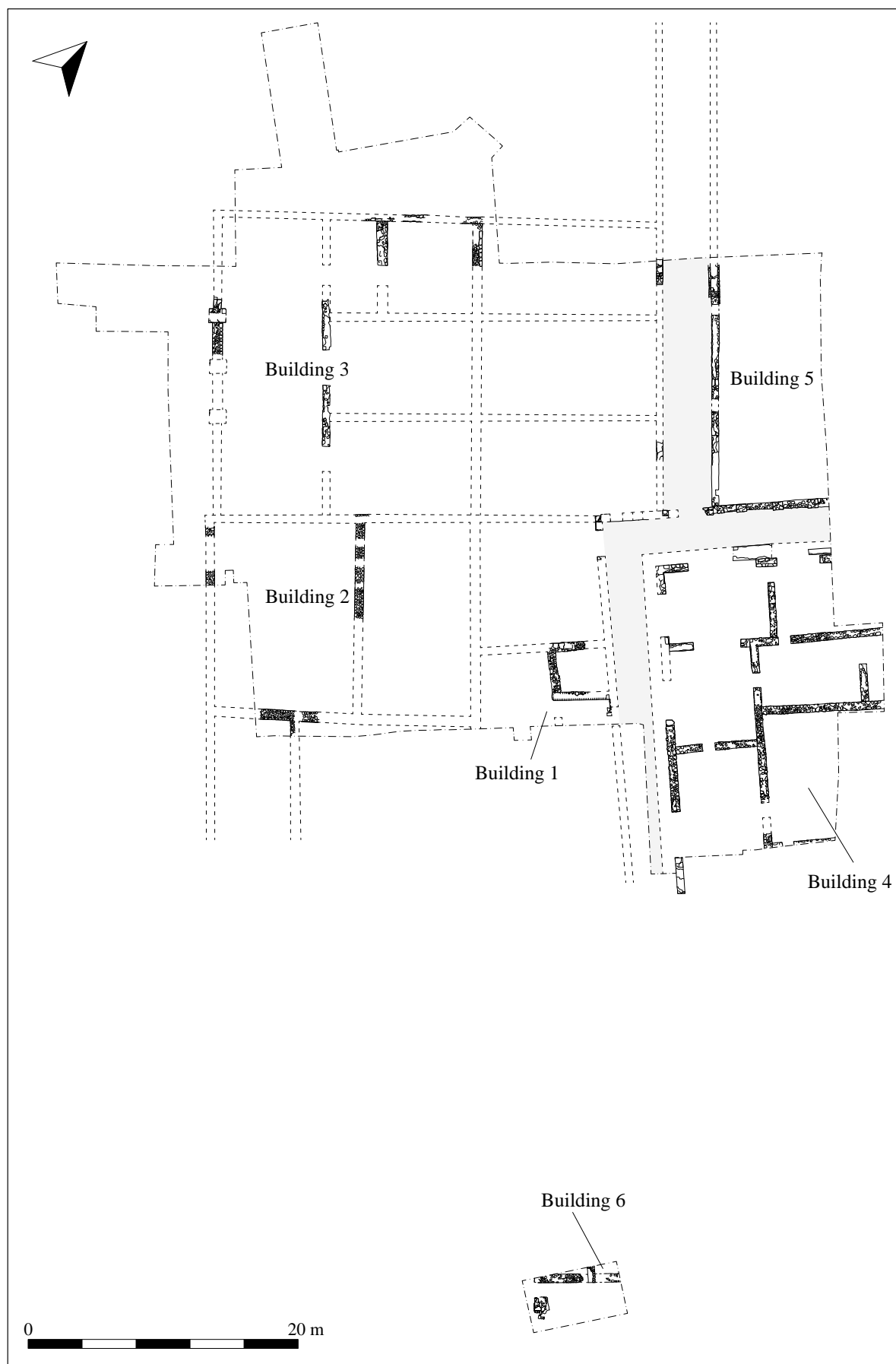


Figure 3.29. Location of Building 6 in relation to the rest of the suburb

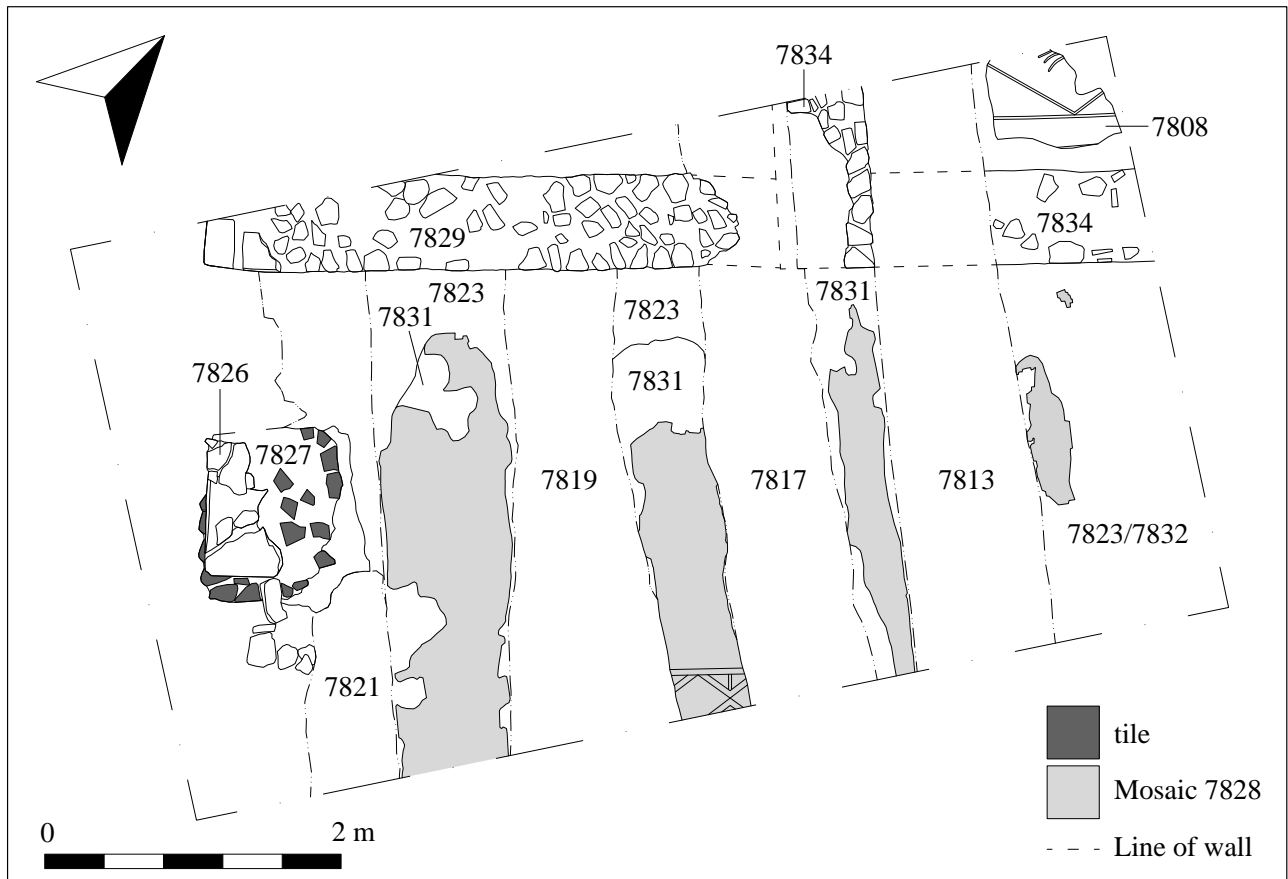


Figure 3.30. Plan of Building 6

represented by wall 7834, Building 6 (Fig. 3.30). Measuring 0.60 m wide, wall 7834 was built of rough limestone blocks bonded with a mid- to dark-orange sandy mortar.

Within the space defined by this wall, a mosaic floor of very fine white and black *tesserae* (10 mm²) was found (7808), overlying a foundation bed of pinkish-grey mortar. The western side of the mosaic had been damaged by a trench (cut 7813) thought to be associated with cultivation activity from the Late Antique Phase 7 period. Part of the border of the mosaic was exposed along the southern edge of the room.

To the west of wall 7834 a second wall was located (7829) aligned with the southern wall of the building. The relationship between these walls is unclear as another Phase 7 cultivation trench (cut 7817) had partially truncated the western side of wall 7834 and the eastern end of 7829, thereby removing the connection between the two (Fig. 3.31). It was noted, however, that the build of wall 7829 was slightly rougher than wall 7834 and that the mortar used in the build was different, being a yellow/light-orange sandy mortar. As such it may be that wall 7829 was a slightly later build, constructed against the southwestern corner of the earlier building.

Wall 7829 was exposed for c. 3.60 m. Only the southwestern corner of the wall was located as the northern part carried on beyond the limit of the excavation. Despite

this, it is thought that wall 7829 had originally turned at this point, as a slot dug at the western end of the trench revealed three courses of well-cut, square-hewn limestone blocks along the southern edge of the wall.

To the south of wall 7829 traces of another mosaic (7828), set over a mortar layer (7831) that had been spread across the natural alluvial deposit (7823/7832) through which the building had been constructed, was located. This mosaic survived as a series of parallel strips running across the southern part of the trench. The mosaic had been partly destroyed by further Phase 7 cultivation trenches. The *tesserae* used in this mosaic were much larger (c. 20 mm²) than those of mosaic 7808. Although the pavement was severely damaged, a fragment of a geometric design, made from black *tesserae*, was seen on the central remaining strip of mosaic just inside the trench edge (see Figs. 3.30 and 3.31). The design suggests it was part of a focal panel in the centre of the pavement, framed by a broad white border. From the size of the *tesserae* and the solidity of the mosaic it is possible that this floor functioned as an external surface.

The western side of the floor may have been closed by a colonnade, as approximately 1.14 m southeast of the corner of wall 7829 the remains of a rectangular pier base were located (7826). The pier had been built on a substantial foundation (7827) (1.20 m²) consisting of a course of rough limestone blocks bonded with a hard gritty grey mortar



Figure 3.31. Building 6, looking east (1 m scale)

that formed a layer covering the stones. A layer of broken tiles had then been laid into the mortar, onto which the pier base 7826 had been built. Further piers are thought to be located to the south of 7826.

Phase 2: 2nd to early 3rd century

During the 2nd century AD, the settlement appears to have expanded. This is reflected across the site by the construction of a number of new buildings (Fig. 3.32, Plate 3.2). The most obvious development was the construction of a new cistern in the northeast corner of the site, which required the removal of the earlier Phase 1 building, Building 5.

The cistern

The cistern was built at the junction of the channel road and the main east–west road (Fig. 3.33). It was made up of three chambers, Rooms A, B1 and B2 (Fig. 3.34). The southern and western walls of the cistern were formed by wall 32, with wall 8 forming the northern wall. Internally the chamber was divided by wall 33. To the north of this a further north–south wall (7366) divided the northern chamber in two.

The walls were built with a substantial rubble core of

tightly mortared limestone pieces that were then faced in brick/tile and limestone. Within Room A many of these facing stones had been removed so only the lower courses survived at the base of the wall (Fig. 3.35), while the walls of Room B2 only survived at the level of the footings, due to later alterations. In Room B1, on the other hand, the northern face of wall 33, along with its facing stones, remained intact, surviving to a height of 3.18 m at which point the spring of an arch for a barrel-vaulted roof could be seen (Fig. 3.36). This wall gives a good indication of how solid the construction of the cistern was, comprising alternating courses of rectangular-shaped limestone blocks interspersed with brick/tile courses, along with a band in an *opus incertum* style of masonry set slightly over half way up the wall (Fig. 3.37). In places the mortar had been scored with vertical and horizontal lines around the stones.

The external sides of wall 32 were not faced as the core of the wall had been built directly up against the line of the earlier walls that fronted onto the roadways. This could clearly be seen at the northwestern corner of the cistern where the southern wall of the earlier Building 5, comprising the aqueduct pier and associated blocking wall, had collapsed and the cistern core behind (surviving to a height of 2.60 m) could be seen to have a flat exterior

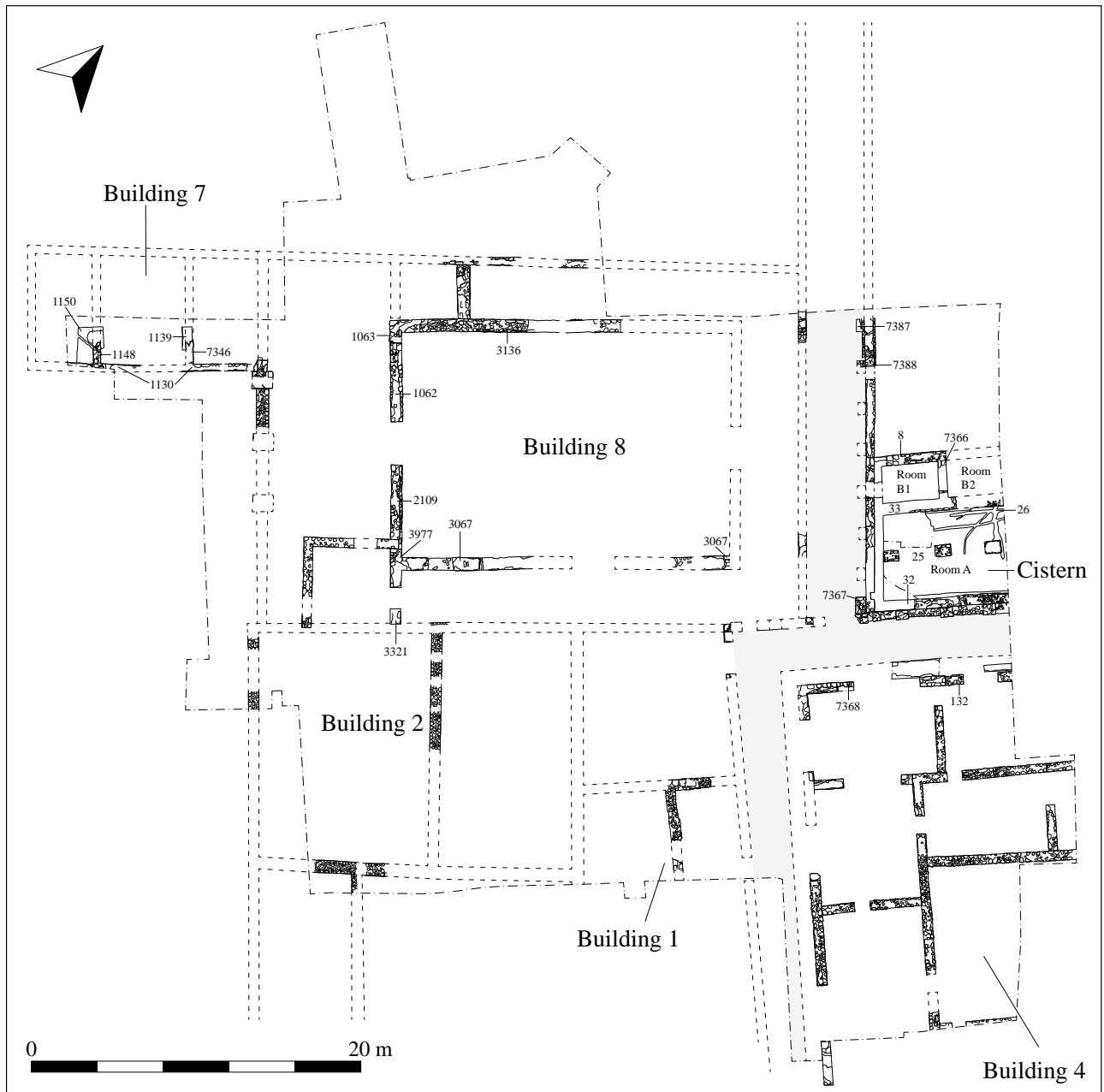


Figure 3.32. The Vrina Plain settlement showing areas of activity in Phase 2 (2nd to early 3rd century)



Figure 3.33. The Phase 2 cistern at the intersection of the channel and the main east–west road

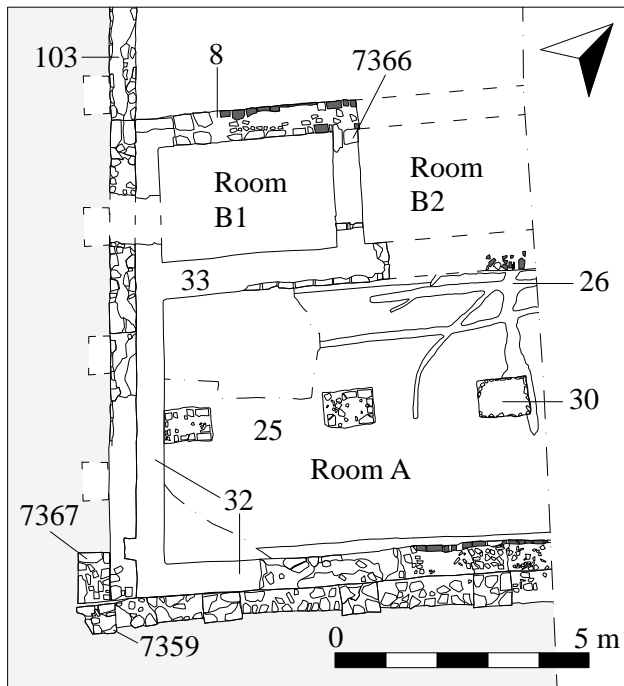


Figure 3.34. Plan of the cistern



Figure 3.35. Room A, looking west, showing the surviving lower coursing of the walls (2 m scale)

face where it had originally abutted against the inner face of the earlier wall (Fig. 3.38). As part of this construction the rubble core was also used to block in the window openings at the southern end of the western wall 103 (see Fig. 3.27).

The largest chamber of the cistern was Room A. Measuring 5.20×7.50 m, the full extent of the room to the east is unclear as it continued beyond the limit of the excavation. To help support the roof, a series of substantial rectangular piers (0.98×0.70 m) were built down the length of the chamber, set just slightly north of the centre of the room. These piers were constructed as part of the original build of the cistern as the western pier had been built into the core of the inner face of the western wall,



Figure 3.36. Northern face of wall 33. The holes connecting the chamber to Room A can be seen along the western side of the wall

the scar of which could still be seen along the eastern face of wall 32. Following this, the room was covered with a mortar floor (25) (0.10 m thick). Where the floor had been levelled around the piers it was slightly raised due to the mortar having been smoothed against the standing piers. At the edges of the room the floor had been lipped-up against the walls and quarter-round mouldings had been added to obscure the connection. The walls of the chamber had originally been covered with a layer of hydraulic *pozzolana* plaster (40 mm thick), fragments of which were found adhering to their lower faces.

A series of interconnecting linear cuts (26) was made into the *cocciopesto* floor 25 (see Fig. 3.34).¹³ The function of these features is unknown. They may have served as drains but could have been cut to contain lead or ceramic piping connected with the working of the cistern.

The western chamber of the cistern's northern rooms, B1, measured 3.40×2.30 m and seems to have been connected to Room A as two small holes were found to pierce the western edge of wall 33 (see Figs. 3.36 and 3.37). Incorporated into part of the original build of the wall, the smoothness of the mortar within the holes suggests that they may have held either lead or ceramic *tubuli*, which would have allowed water to flow between the two chambers. As with Room A, the walls of the chamber were covered by a similar hydraulic plaster that had been angled in the corners and quarter-round mouldings connected the floor to the walls. The floor levels of both Room A and chamber B1 were found to be at a similar height.

Penetrating the floor of chamber B1 was a slight depression that had partially exposed the tile make-up forming the foundation of the floor (Fig. 3.39). Located slightly off-centre, it was suggested that this undulation may have been caused by rainwater cascading down from a hole in the barrel-vaulted roof wearing the surface

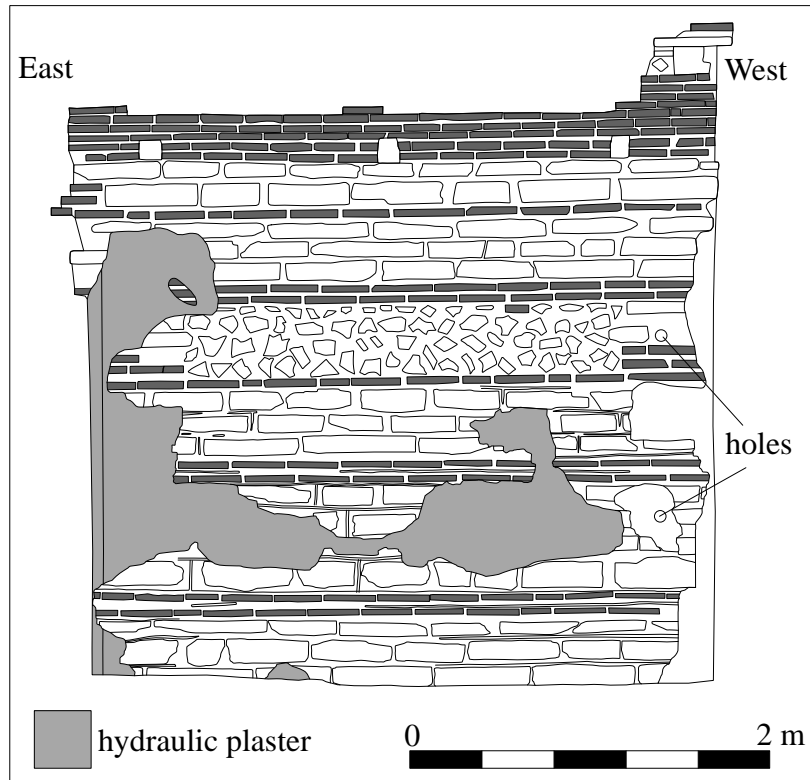


Figure 3.37. North-facing elevation of wall 33



Figure 3.38. Southern face of the core of wall 32

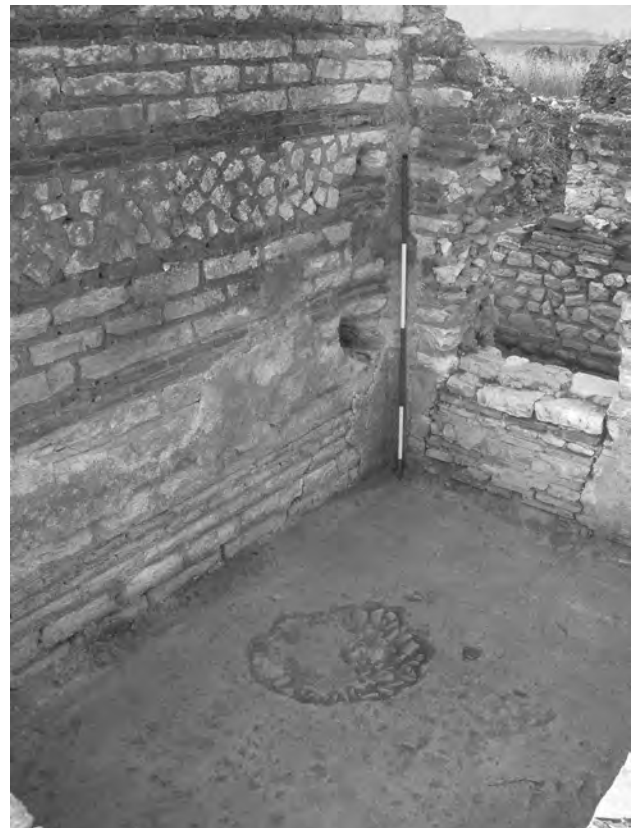


Figure 3.39. Detail of the depression penetrating the floor of Room B1 (2 m scale)



Figure 3.40. Pier 7367 at the southern end of wall 103. The Phase 1 pier 7359 of the *diverticulum* can be seen to the right of it

away.¹⁴ Excavations along the western side of the cistern suggest it might also have been caused by a cascade of fresh water from a new offshoot of the *diverticulum* that appears to have run along the western side of wall 103, since at the southwestern corner of the cistern a rectangular pier 7367 (0.98 × 0.64 m) was located abutting the northern side of pier 7359 and the western face of wall 103 (Fig. 3.40). Two similar-sized piers (7387 and 7388) were found 14 m to the north of 7367, again built abutting the western face of the earlier wall 103. As these piers were found almost 5.50 m beyond the cistern they would appear to indicate that as well as supplying the cistern, the arcade also carried water to a further, as yet unknown, structure beyond it.

Very little of the eastern chamber (B2) survives as a result of later alterations. However, where the original walls of the chamber were observed, towards its western side, there was no evidence that it had ever been lined. Thus rather than having been a water tank, this space may have served as an access room to draw water from the adjacent chambers.

Building 4

During this phase the northern entrances of Rooms 1 and 2 were both narrowed (Fig. 3.41). In Room 1 wall 132 was inserted across the doorway between walls 112 and 3441. Incorporated into the new wall was a doorway (1.80 m wide) and threshold stone (3066), positioned along the eastern side of the wall (Fig. 3.42). To the west in Room 2, wall 7368 was built along the western side of the room's northern doorway, abutting wall 3442, reducing the width of this doorway to 4 m.

Following these changes Room 2 may have been used partially as a store room, since at least nine complete and broken amphorae were found in the northwest corner of the room (7258, 7259, 7260, 7263, 7264, 7265, 7266, 7267 and 7270) (Fig. 3.43).¹⁵ Thought to date from the third quarter of the 2nd century AD, and including wine amphorae from southern Italy as well as an almost complete Portuguese late Roman Dressel 14 amphora (7258), these amphorae had been used as levelling to support the floor of Room 2 in the subsequent *domus* phase (Phase 3a) (see Chapter 4). Interestingly, several of the amphorae appear to have been re-used as they were filled with crushed calcite, an inclusion often found in local/Epirote cooking wares (for a discussion of the significance of this see Volume 6.3).

The Buildings

The Western Buildings: the northern plot

BUILDING 7

This building was situated in the northwest corner of the northern plot (Fig. 3.44). Wall 1130 formed the southern extent of the building. Measuring 10.90 × 0.45 m, it was built from a mix of rectangular and sub-rectangular limestone blocks, with an average size of 0.22 × 0.20 × 0.04 m, bonded with a mid-yellowish-brown mortar. The eastern extent of the wall was built against the western limit of Building 3 (7345), while its western end continued beyond the limit of the excavation.

Keyed into the northern face of wall 1130, and built in a similar construction technique, were walls 1148 and 7346 (Fig. 3.45). These walls divided the northern area of

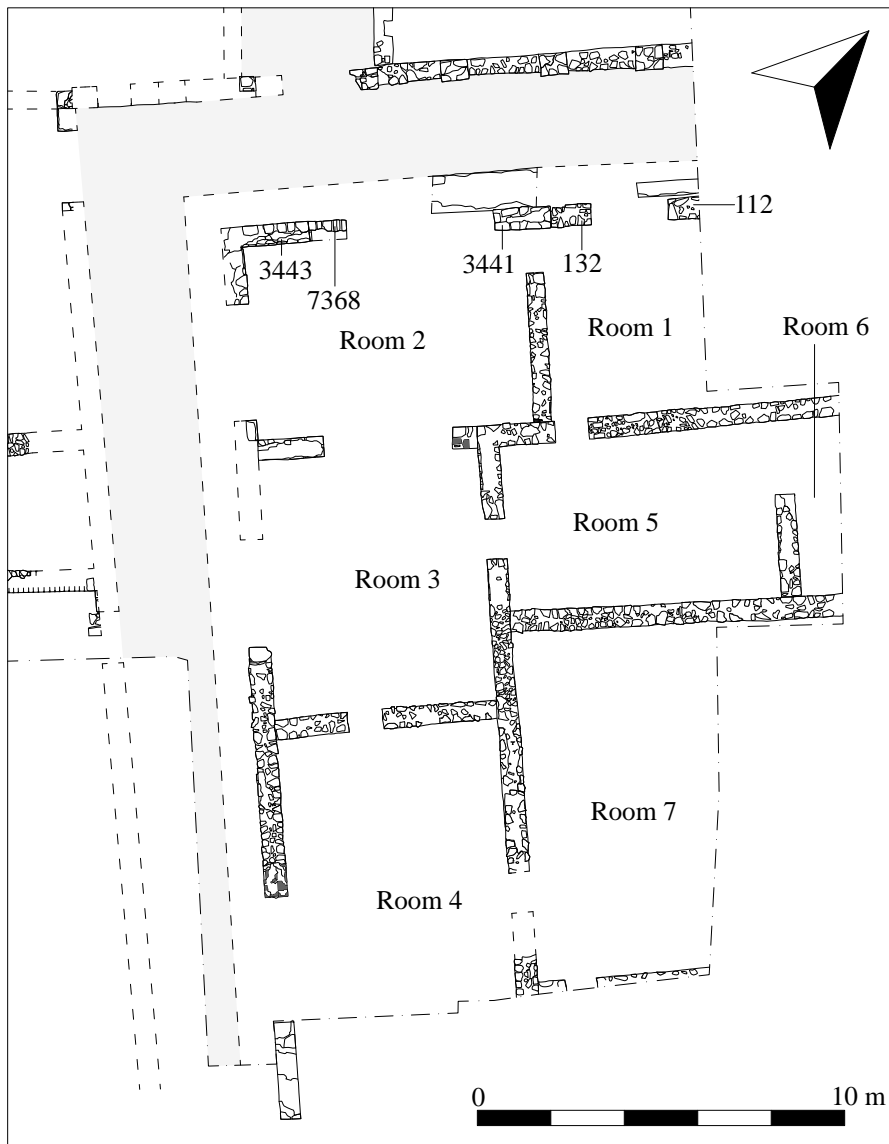


Figure 3.41. Building 4 in Phase 2

the building into three rooms. Only the southern half of these walls survived, as the northern end of both walls had been truncated by the cutting of the drainage ditch in the 1960s. The truncation did indicate that both walls had been built over solid foundations. Below wall 1148 a large concrete pad was observed (1150), composed of layers of limestone rubble set within a coarse white cement; this pad extended below wall 1130. To the east, wall 7346 was found to have been built directly onto a large limestone slab (1139).

Although no contemporary floor surfaces were found, a series of levelling deposits excavated in the central and eastern rooms are thought to have supported the floors (Fig. 3.46).¹⁶ In the central room the lowest deposit encountered was 1132, a mid-brown clay silt that contained frequent small limestone flecks. Overlying this was 1143, a mid-greyish-white clay silt, 0.12 m thick. This in turn was sealed by 1142/1147, a mid-brownish-green clay silt, c. 0.10 m thick. In the eastern room only one deposit was used to level the room, a mid-greyish-brown clay silt (1131). This deposit contained ceramics dating to the first half of the 2nd century AD and is thought to have been laid down at the same time as 1142/1147 to create a consistent level throughout the rooms of the building.

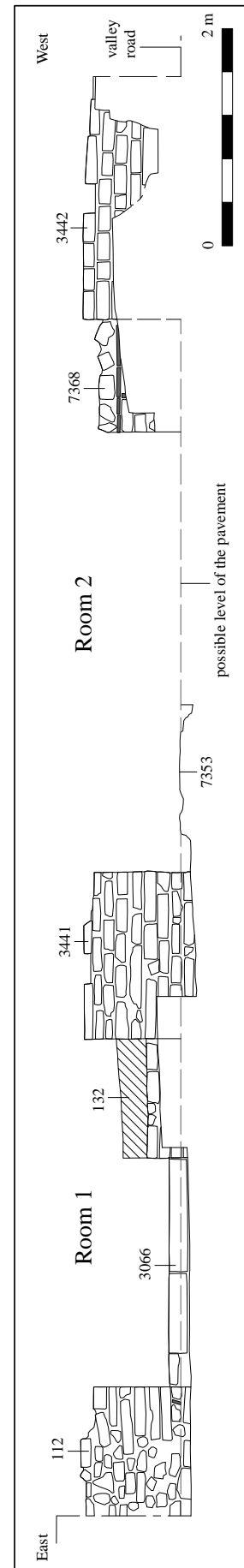


Figure 3.42. North-facing elevation of the northern wall of Building 4 showing blocking walls 132 and 7368 built across the entrances of Rooms 1 and 2

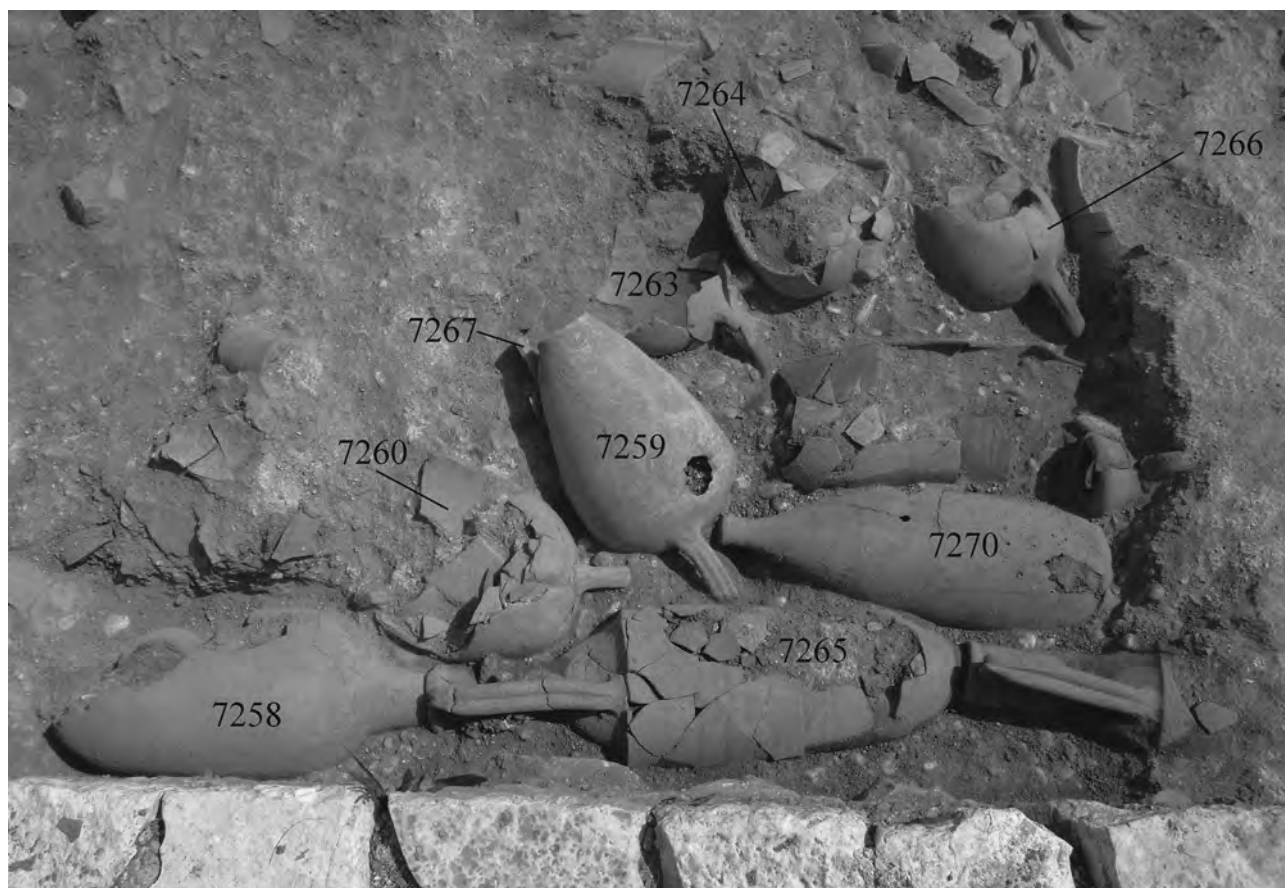


Figure 3.43. Overhead view of the late 2nd-century amphorae used as make-up for the floor of the Phase 3a Room 2

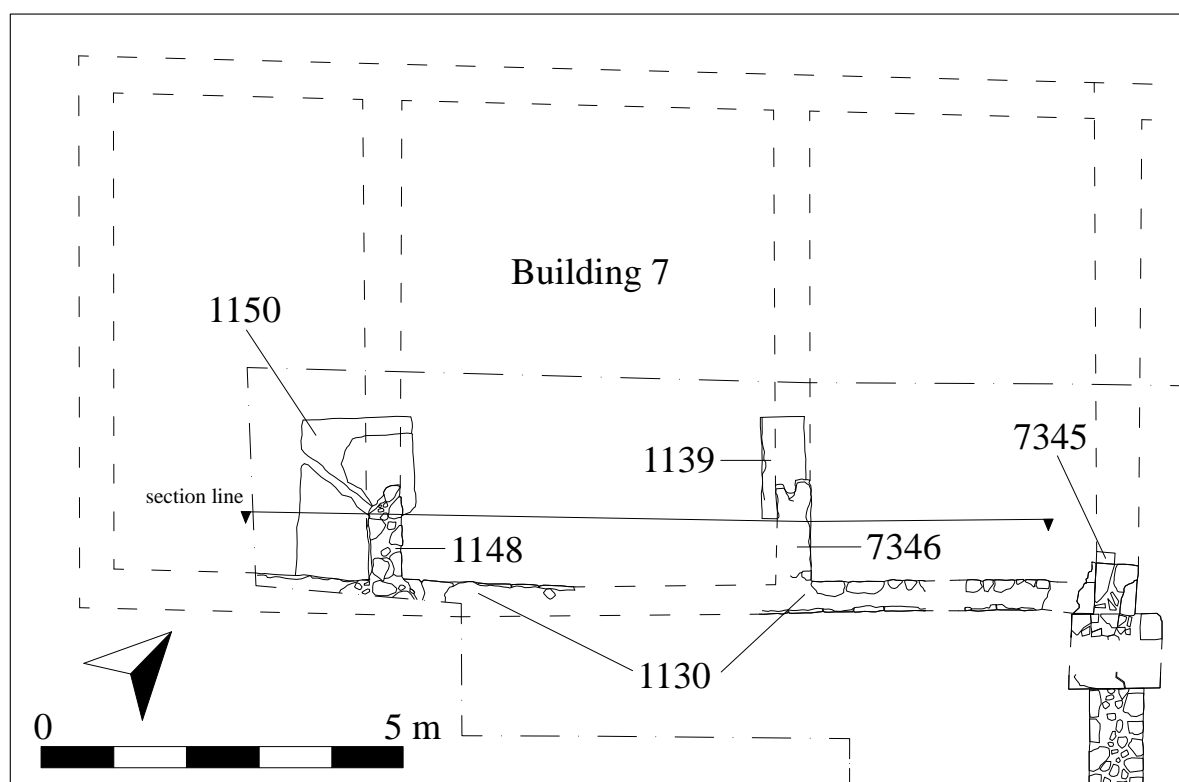


Figure 3.44. Plan of Building 7, with location of section shown in Fig 3.46

BUILDING 8

To the east of Building 7 a substantial new building (Building 8) was constructed comprising walls 1063, 3136, 3977, 3067 and 3321 (Fig. 3.47). These walls were built of well-cut rectangular limestone blocks (averaging $0.36 \times 0.23 \times 0.11$ m in size) bonded with a yellowish-white gritty mortar. In places the mortar around the stones had been scored with horizontal and vertical lines.

The western wall of this new structure partially incorporated walls 1062 and 2109 of Building 3. The walls of the new build were slightly wider than those of the earlier build at 0.68–0.74 m wide. To compensate for this, a wall was inserted along the eastern face of both walls 1062 and 2109 (7371 and 7372 respectively) (Figs 3.48 and 3.49). Wall 7372 also extended over the eastern end of wall 3978. As part of this work, the northern end

of wall 1062, which seems to have been damaged as a result of these alterations, was repaired. The doorway that separated the two earlier walls remained open.

Wall 1063 abutted the northern end of wall 1062 and extended for 1.30 m before turning to the east to form the northern wall of the building (3136). Wall 3136 was traced for 13.35 m, at which point later alterations related to the 3rd-century *domus* obscured it. To the south, wall 3977 was built abutting the southern edge of wall 3978. Measuring 2.35 m in length, wall 3977 ended in a doorway (1.30 m wide), the southern side of which was formed by wall 3321. Wall 3321 (0.93 m in length) formed the southwestern limit of Building 8 and is assumed to have abutted the plot boundary wall 7344. With the construction of walls 3977 and 3321, the eastern end of the space defined by the earlier walls 3978 and 3979 was closed off, creating a small room 4.77×4.72 m in size which could be entered by the doorway separating the new eastern walls.

Along the eastern side of wall 3977, and built as part of its initial construction, was wall 3067, an east–west-aligned wall that formed the southern limit of the new building. As with the building's northern wall, later alterations had removed much of its length such that only the western end of it survived above ground (5.20 m in length). Traces of the wall's foundation were visible, however, beneath the later Phase 7 basilica, the construction of which was the main reason why wall 3067 had originally been removed. Just 0.10 m beyond the east wall of the basilica (3089), the eastern end of wall 3067 was identified, indicating that the wall had turned at this point to form a north–south angle with the northern wall 3136 (Fig. 3.50). The internal dimensions of this building would have been 20 m east–west by 13.50–13.66 m north–south, the western end of the building being slightly wider than the eastern end.

Building 8 originally had a mortar floor, part of which was exposed in the northwest corner of the building (1076). Further evidence of this floor was revealed below the eastern aisle of the later Phase 7 basilica, indicated by floor 7006/7192 found up against the inner face of wall 3067, the level of which matched that of floor 1076.¹⁷ In both areas white wall plaster was found lining the inner faces of the surrounding walls.

Although architectural features associated with the building are limited due to later alterations, it is possible an opening was located towards the western end of the building's southern wall, as indicated by a series of score

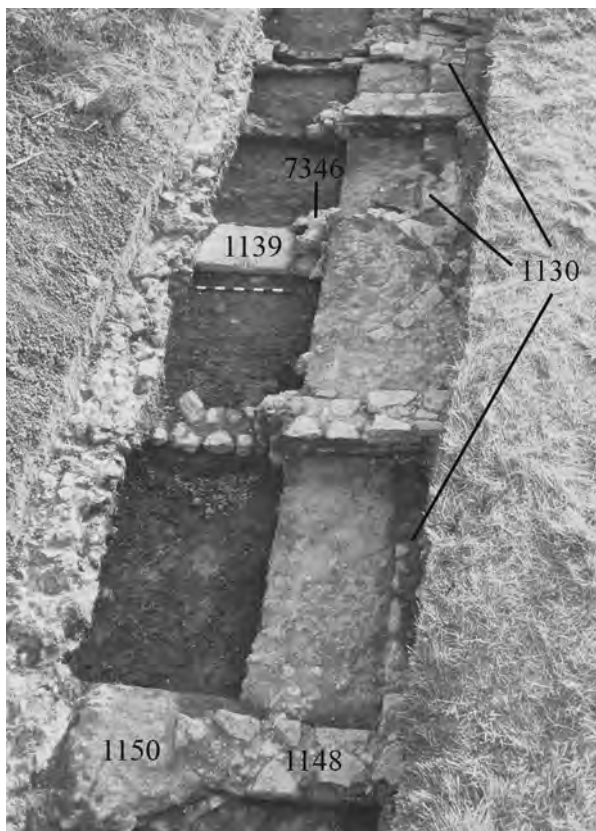


Figure 3.45. Building 7, looking east (1 m scale)

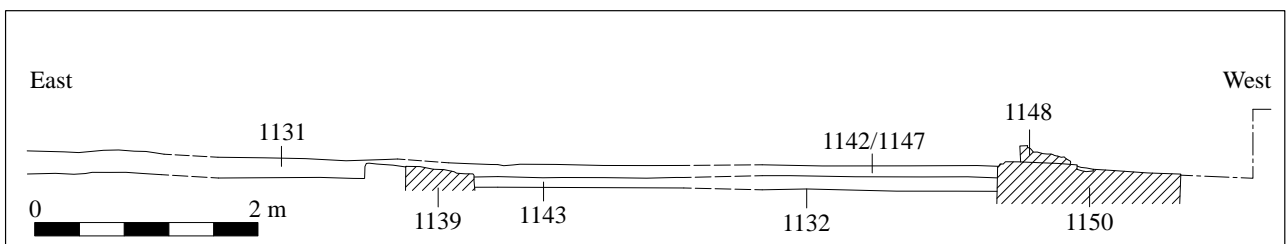


Figure 3.46. North-facing section across Building 7. See Fig. 3.44 for location

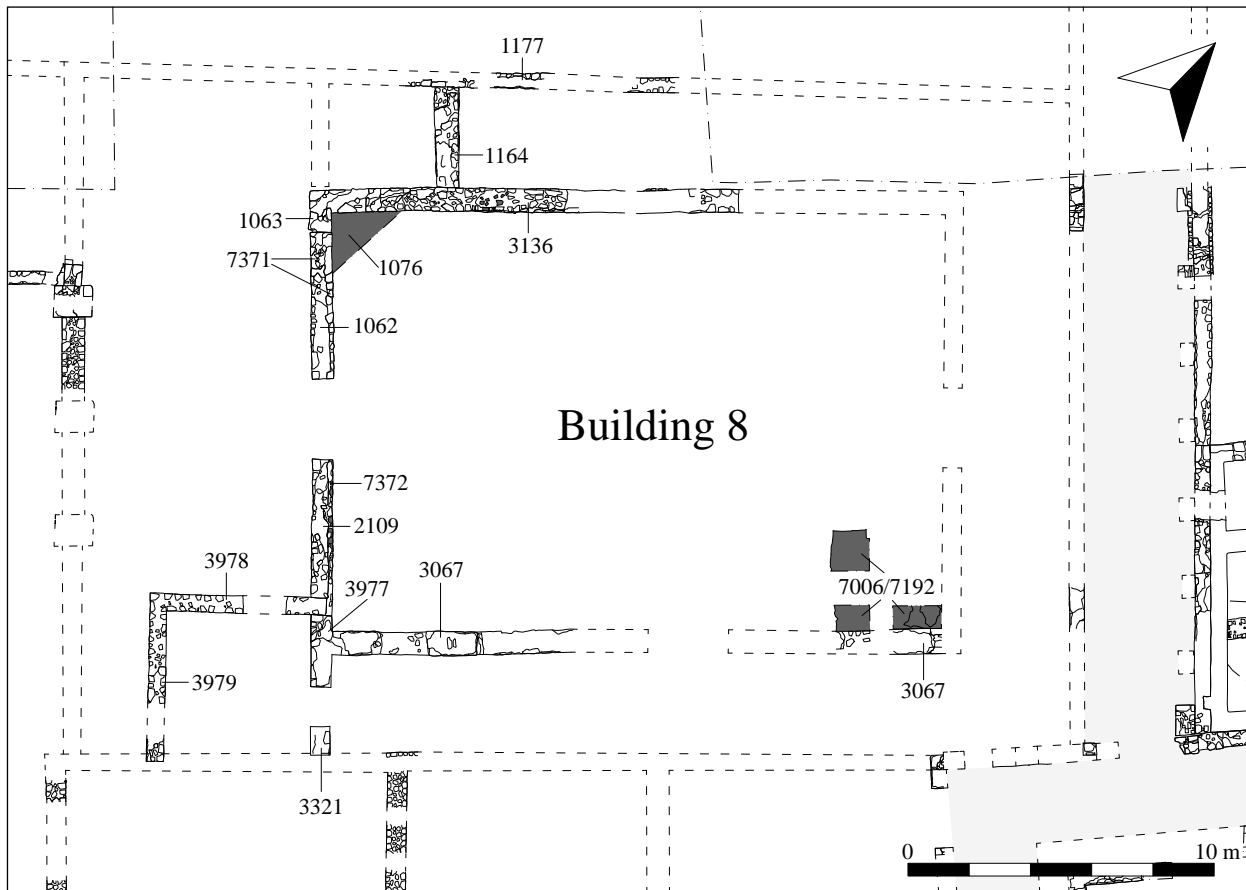


Figure 3.47. Plan of Building 8

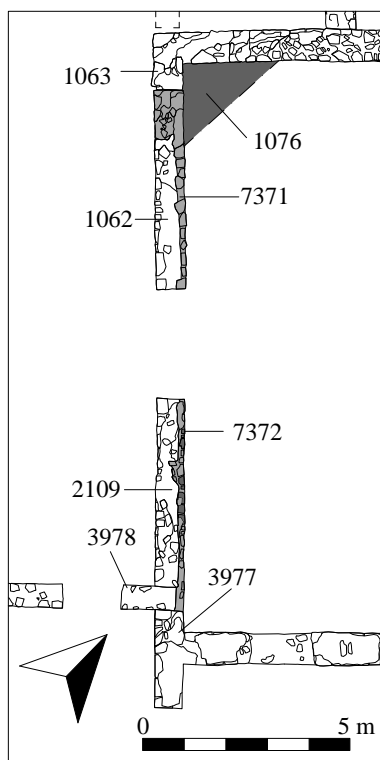


Figure 3.48. The western end of Building 8 showing walls 7371 and 7372 built along the eastern side of walls 1062 and 2109



Figure 3.49. Looking north along the widened western wall of Building 8 (1 m scale)



Figure 3.50. Detail of the eastern end of wall 3067 visible below later rebuilds



Figure 3.51. The western end of wall 3067 showing the possible position of a window indicated by score marks on the inner face of the wall (50 cm scale)

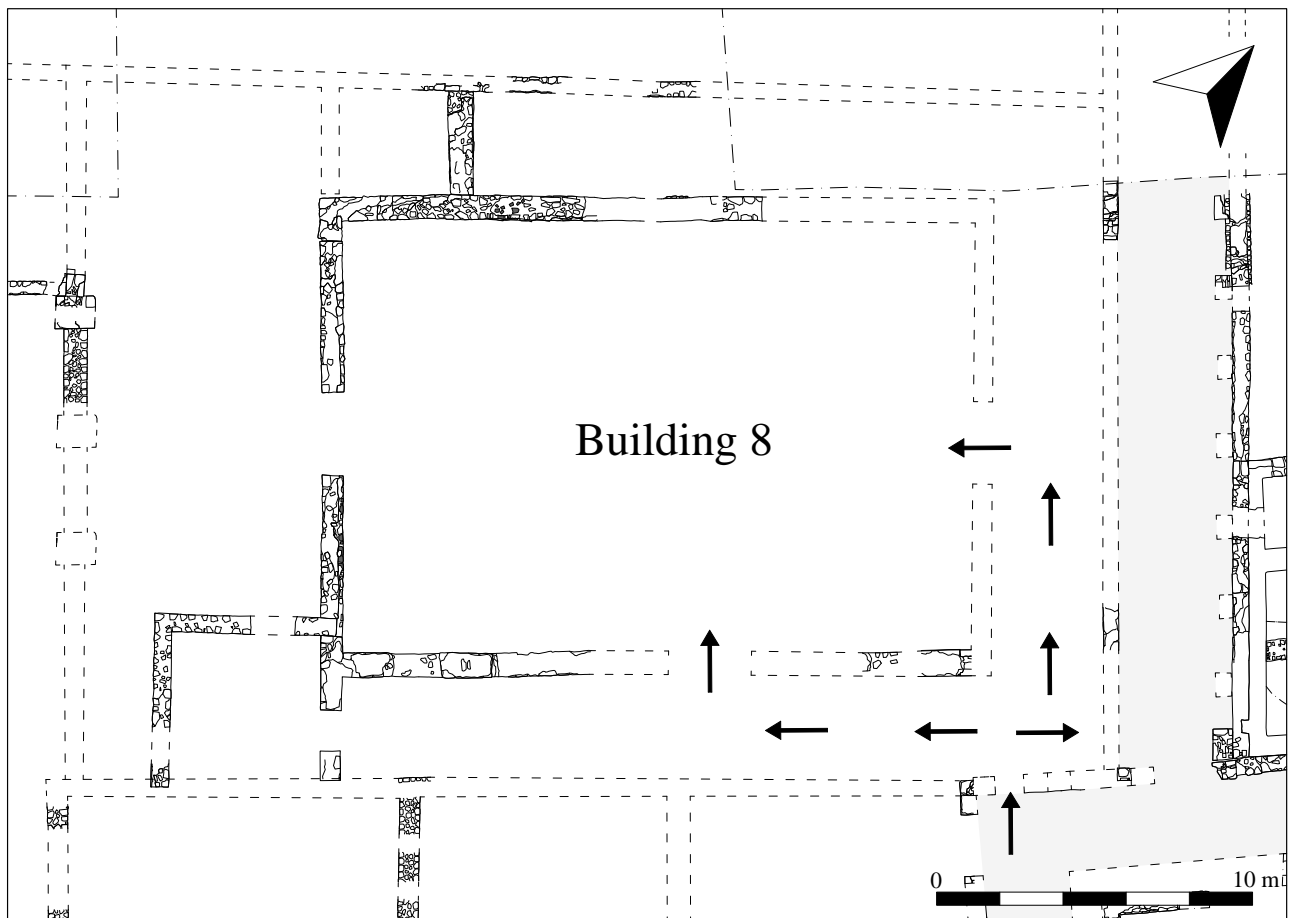


Figure 3.52. Plan of the access routes into Building 8

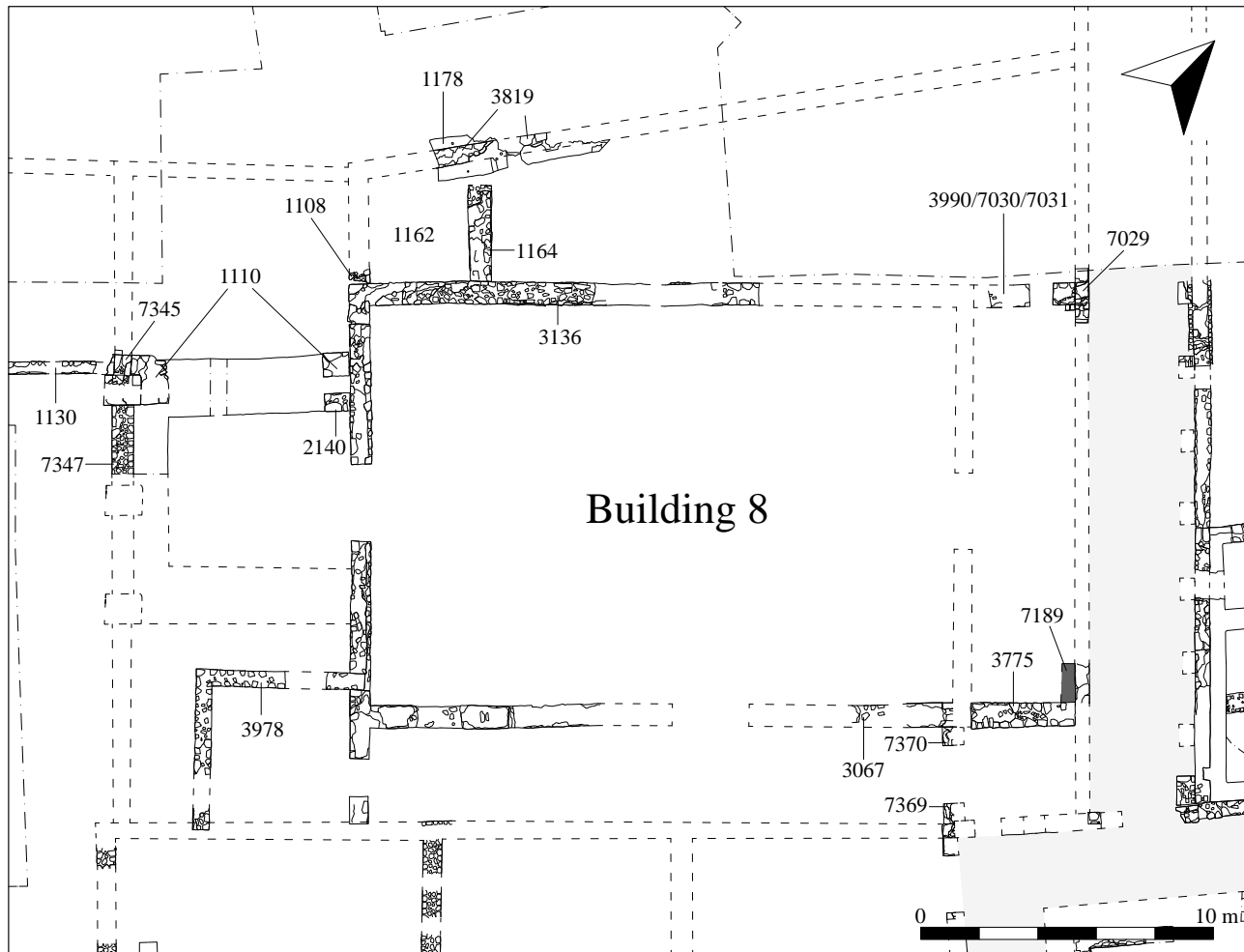


Figure 3.53. Plan of the alterations made to Building 8

marks located on the inner face of wall 3067 at the point where the later Phase 7 basilica had removed it (Fig. 3.51). As the base of these markings was found well above that of the proposed floor of Building 8 it seems likely this gap indicates the position of a window.

Building 8 seems to have been accessed from the east via the earlier doorway located between the westernmost piers of the *diverticulum*, at the junction of the east–west and north–south roads of the settlement (Fig. 3.52). From here it would appear that a corridor (3.25 m wide) ran around the eastern and southern sides of the building (defined by walls 7029 and 7344 respectively), with the southern corridor terminating in the small room created by walls 3977, 3321, 3978 and 3979. Doorways along the northern and southern sides of these corridors would then have allowed access into the main core of Building 8.

In time the building appears to have been altered slightly (Fig. 3.53). The eastern corridor was altered by the construction of walls at either end of this space. Wall 3775 abutted the southeastern corner of Building 8, while wall 3990/7030/7031 abutted the northeastern corner. These walls, placed *c.* 13.50 m apart, are thought to be contemporary. Built from large irregular limestone blocks

interspersed with tile bands, the walls were both 0.80 m wide and appeared to define a new room that formed an annex to Building 8. The room would have been accessed by the doorway located in the proposed eastern wall of the original building. Fragments of a mortar floor (7189) were located up against the inner face of wall 3775, the level of which matched those of the floors found within rest of Building 8. In addition, access to the southern corridor appears to have been restricted since at the eastern end of the corridor, a pier (7369) was built directly against the northern end of the north–south road wall 7360, partially abutting the most westerly branch pier of the aqueduct *diverticulum* 7357 (Fig. 3.54). A second, similar-sized pier (7370) was constructed abutting the southern side of wall 3067, 2 m to the north (Fig. 3.55). The piers were built in a similar technique and are thought to have formed the supports for a doorway that would have allowed the southern corridor to be closed off at times (Fig. 3.56).

With the construction of piers 7369 and 7370 and wall 3775, access into Building 8 became more formalised. Together with the surrounding road walls, the new walls created a small room 3.55 × 3.13 m in size directly off the entrance that would have been the first point of access for



Figure 3.54. Pier 7369 built abutting 7357, the westernmost pier of the Phase 1 diverticulum (50 cm scale)

any visitors to the building. From this room, visitors would have been directed into the southern corridor and would then have entered Building 8 by the door thought to have been located along the southern wall, which had become the principal entrance into the refurbished building.

These changes were not limited to the eastern end of the building, as there are indications that the western end also saw some degree of change in its external appearance (Fig. 3.57). To the north of the western door of the building a fragment of a 2 m wide masonry wall (1110/2140) was found abutting the western face of wall 1062 and cutting through floor 1111/2142 (Fig. 3.58). The majority of this wall had been removed by a broad robber trench (1084/2157),¹⁸ but some 5.30 m to the west the continuation of the wall was located. Here the western edge of the wall had been built up against the eastern side of the foundation block defining the northern side of the doorway through wall 7345 of the earlier Building 3. At this point wall 1110/2140 turned to the south, as indicated by the southern return of the robber cut 7254, and ran along the eastern edge of the doorway's threshold foundation (wall 7347). Assuming the width of the western wall of this structure conformed to that of the northern wall, it would seem that the earlier foundation wall 7347 must have been incorporated into the new build. The southern extent of this structure is not known but it is possible that it may have aligned with



Figure 3.55. Pier 7370 abutting the southern side of wall 3067 (50 cm scale)

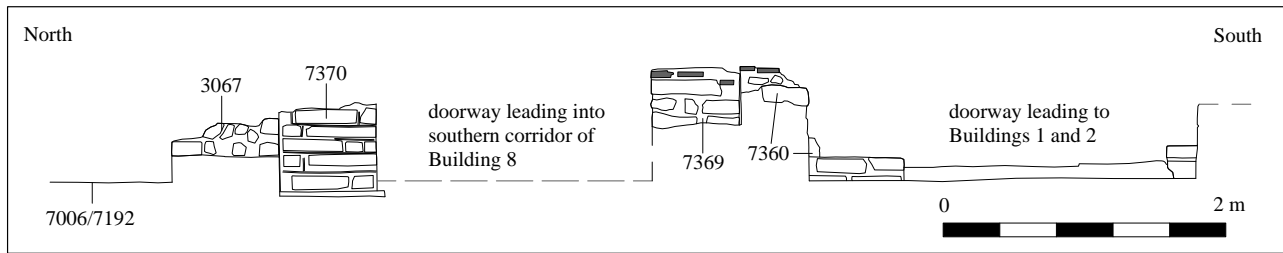


Figure 3.56. West-facing elevation of the doorway leading into the southern corridor of Building 8

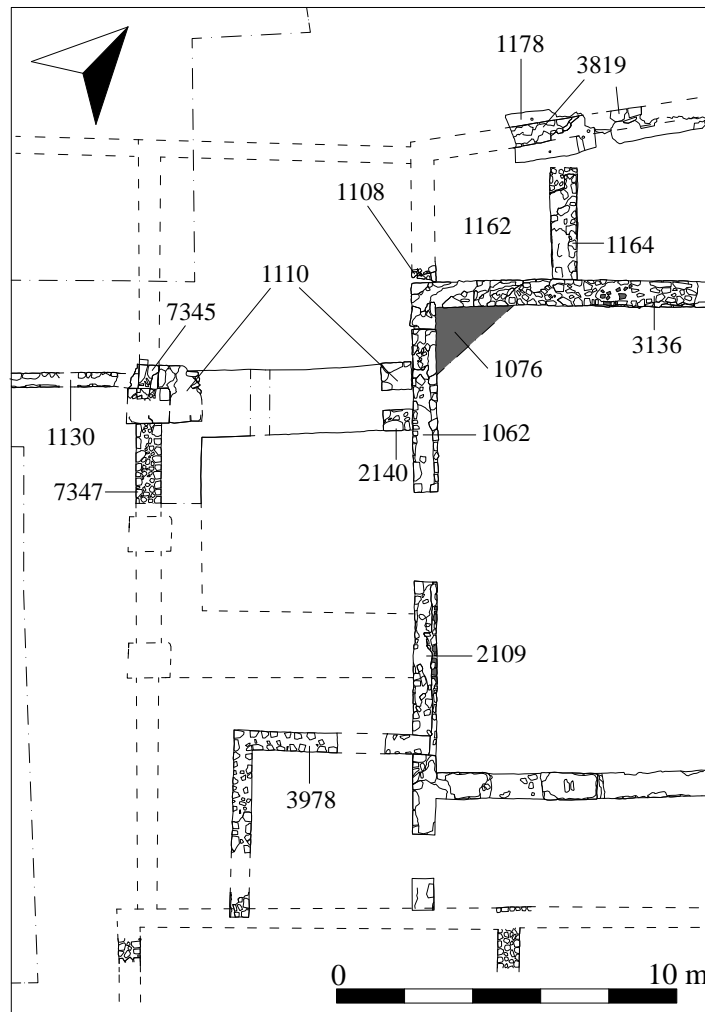


Figure 3.57. The western end of Building 8 following alterations

the southern side of the doorway through wall 7345. If so, the wall would have defined an internal area roughly 5.40×6.20 m. From the width of its foundations, along with its positioning at the edge of the inlet channel, it is possible this structure may have been a tower. There is no evidence that the interior space was resurfaced but in time a trample layer of yellowy-white sand and gravel (2141) accumulated over 2142.

The northern side of the building was also altered at this time as a fragment of walling (1108) was found below the bath-house of the 3rd-century *domus* (Fig. 3.59). Exposed

for roughly 0.65 m, wall 1108 was 0.63 m wide and had been built abutting the northwestern corner of Building 8.

As part of this alteration a new wall was also built along the northern side of the area (3819). Wall 3819 was constructed of rectangular limestone blocks bonded with a yellowish-white gritty mortar and was 0.60 m wide. It had been built over the centre of a large, 1.45 m wide cement foundation (1178) comprising a hardcore of substantial angular limestone fragments covered by a smooth, flat and well-finished mortar (Fig. 3.60).



Figure 3.58. View of the western end of Building 8, looking east, following alterations as seen beneath the later buildings (1 m and 2 m scales)

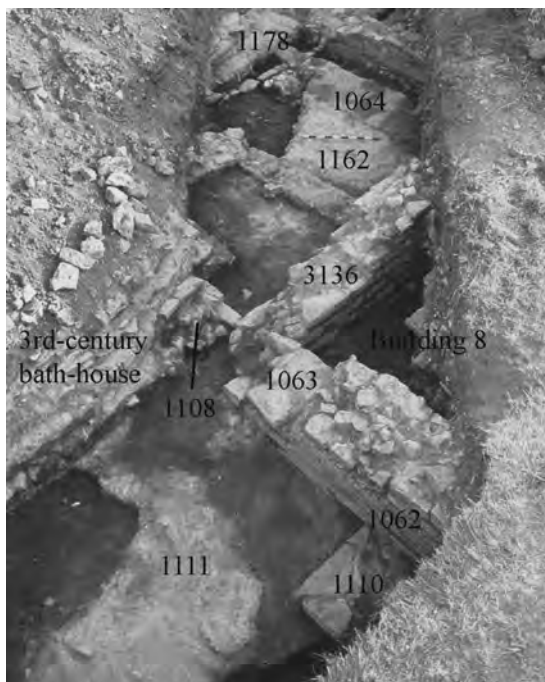


Figure 3.59. Wall 1108 seen beneath the southern corner of the 3rd-century bath-house during the initial drainage ditch excavations. The corner of Building 8 and wall 1110 as well as floor 1162 can also be seen (1 m scale)

The western end of the foundation had been built over wall 1177, indicating that this earlier wall had been demolished prior to the construction of 1178. Due to the later alterations associated with the 3rd-century bath-

house, the full extent of wall 3819 and its associated foundation 1178 is unknown. However, both the wall and its foundation are aligned northeast–southwest, which is an entirely different alignment from the other early walls so far found. Combined with the distinct construction technique, this odd alignment may have been dictated by changes in the environmental conditions at the time, the implication being that the edge of the Vivari Channel had shifted since the construction of the Phase 1 settlement, with wall 3819 now forming the northern limit of the habitable area at this time.

Internally the space defined by these walls was divided into two areas as wall 1164 remained standing following the construction of wall 3136 (see Fig. 3.53). These two areas were accessed from the northeast where, following the removal of wall 1177, a gap would have existed between the northern end of wall 1164 and the inner, southern face of wall 3819. Across the eastern area a mortar floor (1162) was located (see Fig. 3.60). This had been laid over a thick bedding layer of greenish-grey clay (1191). In order to form a firm surface on which to lay floor 1162, limestone chippings, presumably knocked off during the preparation of the stones used in the new walls of the room, were spread across the bedding layer (2190). The area to the east of wall 1164 was also infilled with a series of greyish-brown silty clay deposits (1168 and 1167/1188). In both cases the floor level was more than 0.20 m above the level of the floors found inside Building 8 (cf. Fig. 4.41) and outside to the west of wall 1108 and it seems likely this was done in order to prevent rising ground water penetrating the new surface.

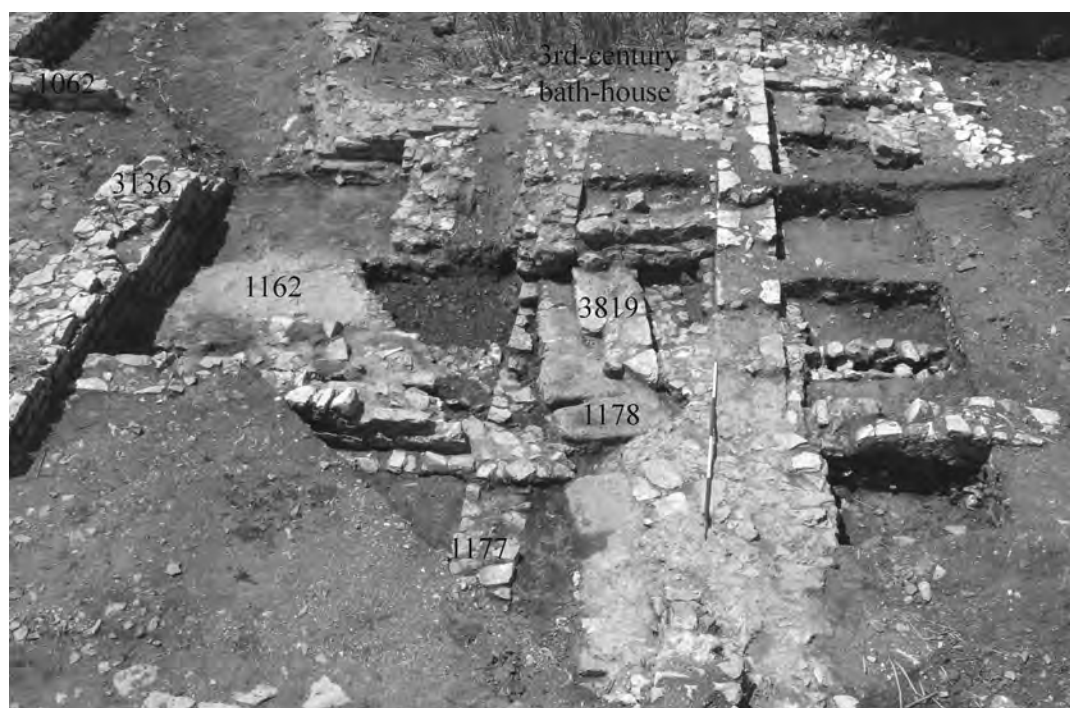


Figure 3.60. View of wall 3819 built over foundation 1178 (2 m scale)

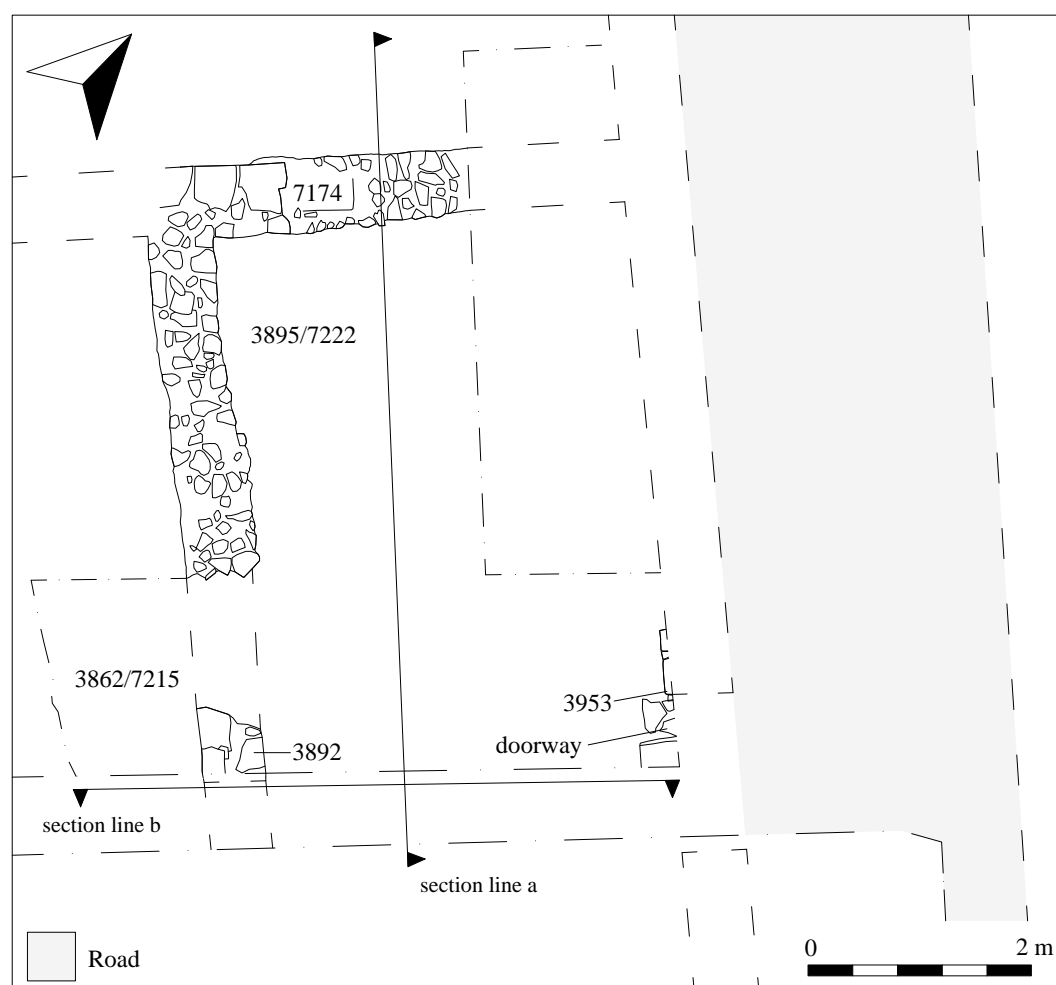


Figure 3.61. Building 1 in Phase 2

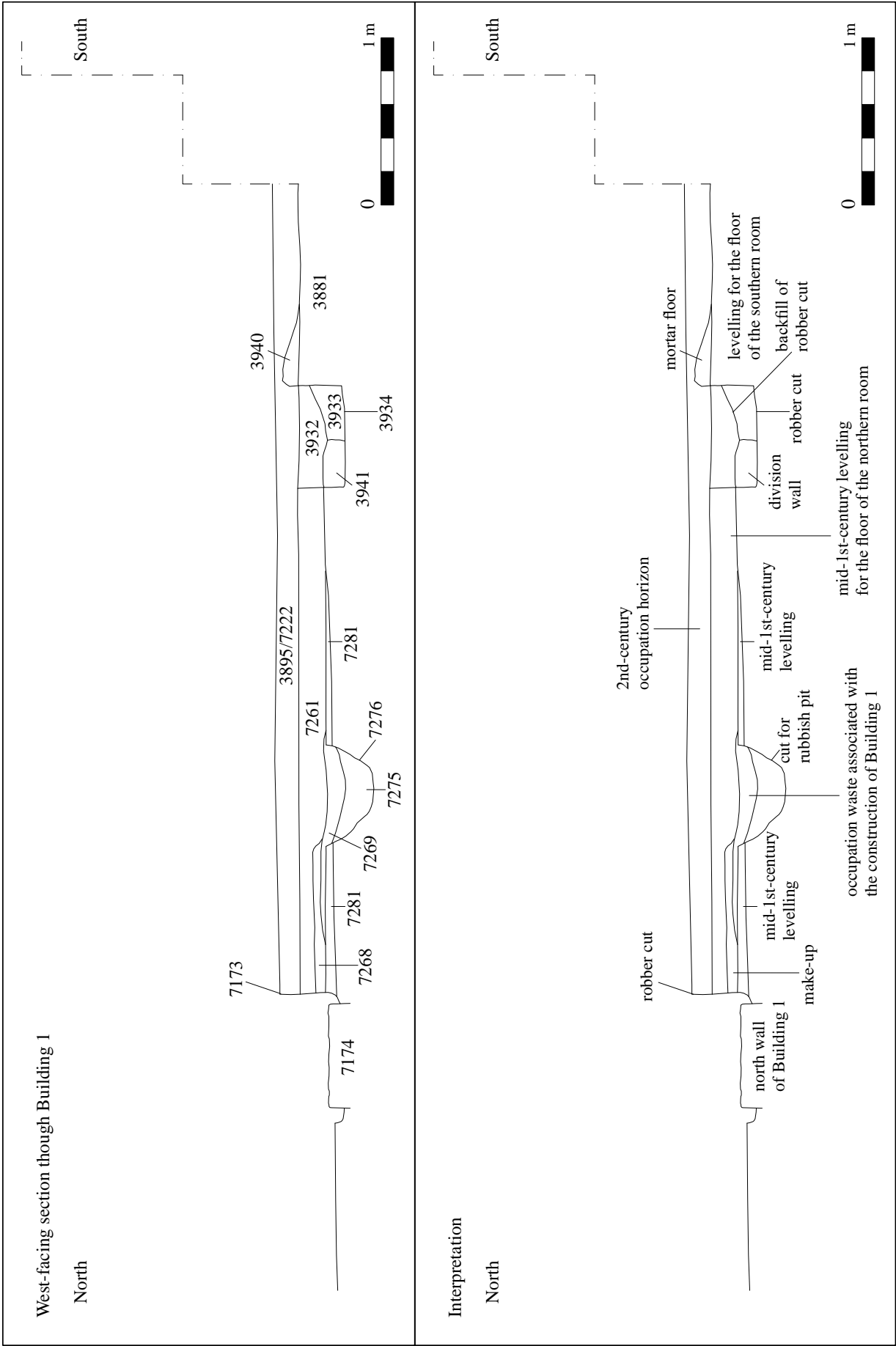


Figure 3.62. North-south section across Building 1 showing Phase 2 features. See Fig. 7.61 for location, section line a

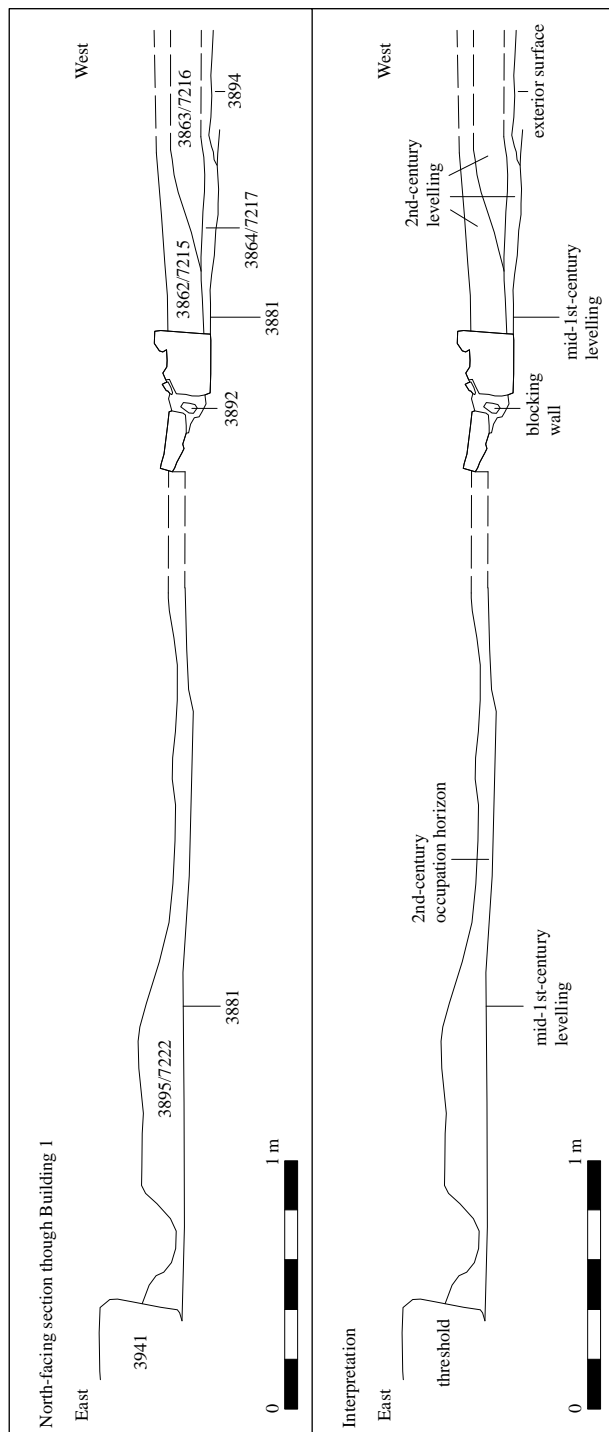


Figure 3.63. East–west section across Building 1 showing Phase 2 features. See Fig. 7.61 for location, section line b

The Southern Plot

BUILDING 1

Building 1 was altered at this time (Figs 3.61 and 3.62). The southern wall of the Phase 1 building (3941) was dismantled and its footings removed.¹⁹ The robber cut 3934 ($4.20 \times 0.64 \times 0.20$ m deep) was then backfilled (3933 and 3932) before a light greyish-brown silty sand (3895/7222), varying in depth from 0.12 m to 0.30 m, was spread across the entire area of the room enclosed by walls 7174 and 3892. Fragments of animal bone and pottery were found pressed into 3895/7222 as well as a copper alloy nail (SF 6417) and a loom weight (SF 6418), implying some form of occupation. Although the dating of this occupation horizon is unclear, layer 3933, the primary infill of robber cut 3934 sealed by 3895/7222, contained ceramics dating to the 1st or 2nd century AD, which provides a *terminus post quem* for these actions.

The internal changes also seem to have been reflected externally. To the west of walls 3892 and 7174 a series of deposits appears to have built up over the external surface 3894 (Fig. 3.63). The earliest was 3864/7217, a light brownish-grey silty sand. This layer was very distinct as the majority of it was crushed shell. Above this was 3863/7216, a mid-grey clay silt. This was covered in turn by 3862/7215, a greyish-brown sandy silt. As with 3864, this deposit contained a large amount of crushed shell. These deposits contained mid-1st and 2nd/3rd-century AD ceramics and seem to have been deliberately laid to raise the level of the western area.

BUILDING 2

To the west of wall 7342 a layer of mid-greenish-brown silty clay (7328), containing pottery dating to the first half of the 2nd century, was spread across the area to raise the level of the contemporary ground surface extending to the channel edge.

The Southern Buildings

BUILDING 6

To the south, Building 6 also seems to show some signs of alterations at this time (Fig. 3.64). The wall 7829 (see Fig. 3.30) was removed and replaced by a new wall aligned north–south (7825). Built of a mix of roughly cut limestone blocks and tiles bonded with a light-cream sandy mortar, wall 7825 was constructed over the western end of the earlier wall 7829 and abutted the northern face of pier 7826 (Fig. 3.65). A rough line of stones on the southern side of pier 7826 suggests the line of wall 7825 probably continued to the south of pier 7826, although this walling had been subsequently removed in a later phase. To the west of wall 7825 a gritty grey-brown clay silt deposit (7824) containing small patches of white mortar and tile fragments was found partially covering the lower part of the wall. Within the top 50 mm of this deposit a concentration of limestone chips and broken *tesserae* was noticed, suggesting that 7824 may have formed the bedding layer for a surface located to the west of the blocking wall 7825. Ceramics dating to the 2nd (or

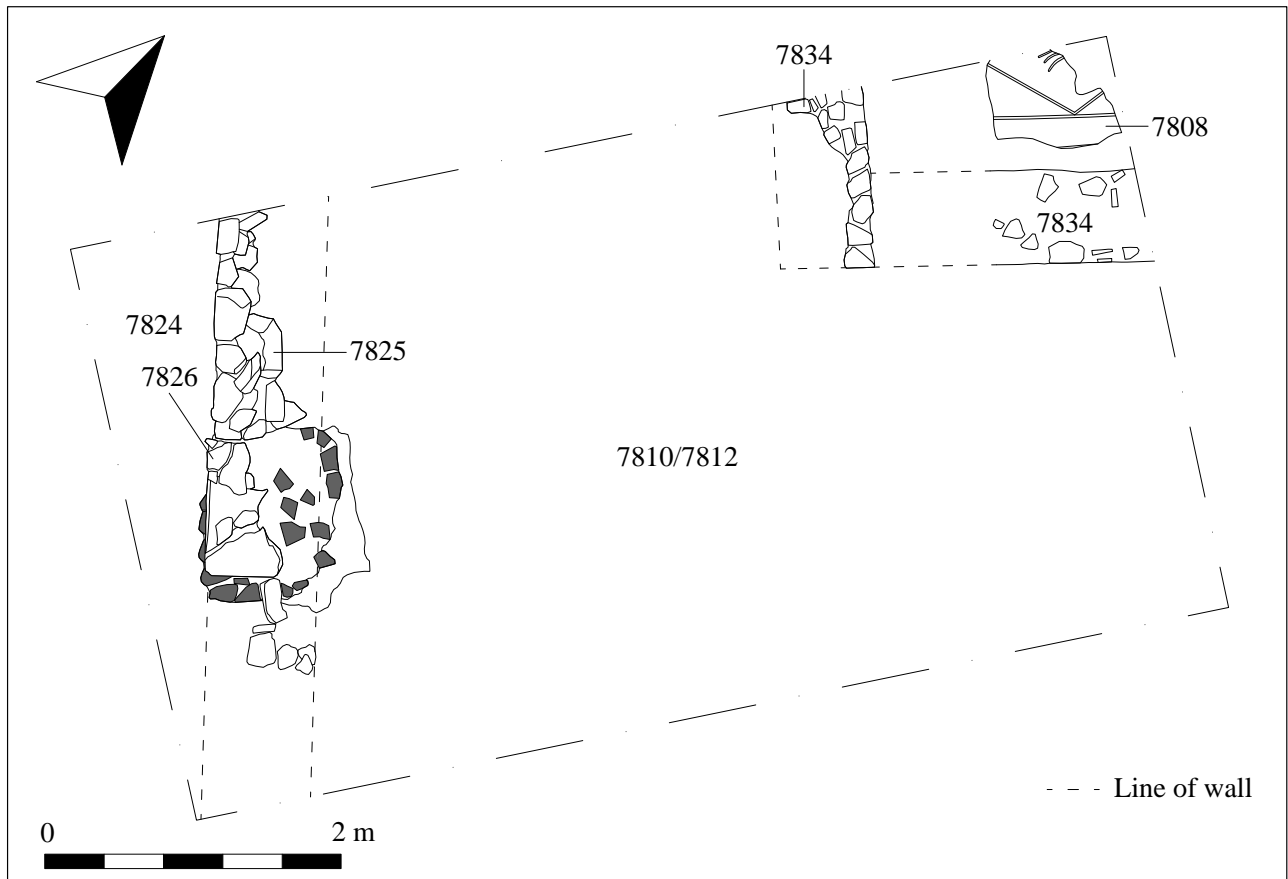


Figure 3.64. Building 6 in Phase 2

3rd century AD were recovered from this deposit. The area to the east of wall 7825 was also levelled over, as indicated by a light greyish-brown silty clay (7810/7812). This layer sealed mosaic 7828 and the remains of wall 7829.

Summary/Interpretation

From an initial small, wooden-built structure of mid-1st century AD date, occupation of the Vrina Plain expanded in the late 1st/early 2nd century AD when a series of houses of varying sizes was constructed across the site, some of which fronted onto the roads that connected the suburb to the main road from Butrint to Mursia to the east.²⁰ Rather than being a haphazard expansion, the settlement was laid out from the start with the houses divided into separate plots. Shops fronted onto the roads with the residential part of the house set behind.

Occupation of the site appears to have expanded further during the 2nd century AD. To supply the needs of an expanding population, a new three-chambered cistern was constructed at the junction of the channel road and the main east–west road, the structure being built within the walls of one of the pre-existing structures that was located here. The cistern received its water from a branch of the Xarra – Butrint aqueduct, the pier arcades of which ran along the southern face of the building.²¹

To the west of the cistern, a large rectangular structure was constructed. Accessed by a doorway located between the westernmost piers of the aqueduct branch, this new building utilised the northern plot boundary wall as its southern limit and an earlier north–south wall as its western limit. In order to fit the new dimensions of the building, the internal eastern face of this western wall was widened. Possibly due to changes in the course of the Vivari Channel, this buildings' northern wall was soon altered, while internally walls were built to control access to the building and at the western end a tower was added.

Along with the addition of new buildings, there are also indications that earlier buildings were altered during this period. A number of the doorways within the eastern shops were narrowed, while the internal arrangement of the building to the west of the shops was changed following the dismantling of the north wall of the original building. The building revealed in the trial excavations to the south of the site also appears to have been altered at this time, with the western wall being removed and a new replacement wall built between the colonnades. A surface was then laid on either side of the new wall, that to the east sealing the building's earlier external mosaic.

These limited glimpses of occupation across the site show that by the end of the 2nd century AD a small urban community appears to have been thriving on the

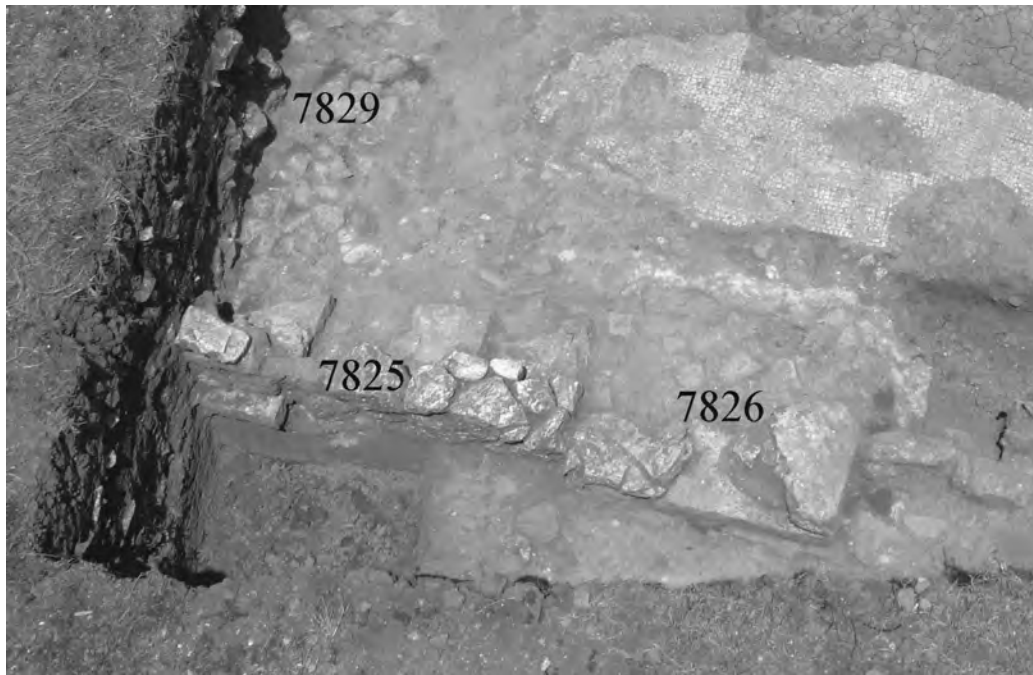


Figure 3.65. Wall 7825 built between wall 7829 and pier 7826

Vrina Plain.²² Taking account of the evidence from the Triconch Palace and the Baptistry, which have both shown contemporary activity, it is clear that Butrint had expanded well beyond the line of the Hellenistic wall which had originally defined the limits of the city, and that, facilitated by a significant road bridge, the Vrina Plain settlement formed a suburban addition to the main city.²³

Notes

- 1 Despite the limited area exposed, this western road may have formed the main approach road to the settlement and bridgehead through the valley, branching from the earlier Hellenistic road system thought to be located just north of Xarra. For a discussion on the reasons why see Chapter 2 (cf. Fig. 2.4).
- 2 For a discussion of the possibility of a river crossing at this point see Chapter 2, Fig. 2.3.
- 3 There was no evidence that the cut continued beyond wall 7174 although this may be due to the fact that it is obscured by unexcavated contexts in this area.
- 4 See Volume 6.3, Chapter 2, Fig. 2.1.18a.
- 5 Further, similar spreads of redeposited soils from these initial groundworks were found throughout the room; these were not numbered.
- 6 See Volume 6.3, Chapter 2, Fig. 2.3.6b.
- 7 It is assumed that further rooms were located to the east of wall 7024 although this could not be substantiated as the later 6th-century basilica had largely covered this area. A gap did exist between the western wall of the basilica (3084/3298) and wall 7024 that varied in width between 1.90 m and 2.40 m but the high water table at the time of the excavations prevented a full investigation of this space.
- 8 The width of the door is unclear but assuming the southern side of it was located at roughly the same distance as the

northern side was from the postulated north wall of Building 3, this would make the door c. 6.40 m wide. This spacing appears very wide and may suggest a third, central column divided the entrance into two smaller doorways.

- 9 In relation to wall 3489, it should be noted that only the northeast corner of the original Phase 1 wall survived as it appears this wall collapsed in Phase 4 and was subsequently rebuilt in Phase 5. For a discussion of this see Chapter 5. The dimensions of wall 3489 are based on the position of the western doorways of Rooms 2 and 3: the surviving part of wall 3489 formed the southern side of the door into Room 2 while the doorway into Room 3 remained constant in the Phase 5 rebuild as the new wall respected the Phase 3 threshold stone 7404.
- 10 These survived as they had been blocked following the construction of the 2nd-century cistern.
- 11 Crowson and Gilkes 2007, 146.
- 12 This point is also discussed in Chapter 9.
- 13 These were all recorded as a single feature given the impossibility of differentiating individual channels, though they probably represent several different events.
- 14 Crowson and Gilkes 2007, 146.
- 15 For the full description of this assemblage see Volume 6.3, Chapter 2.
- 16 No such deposits were exposed in the western room of the building as the cutting of the drainage ditch had been more severe here; the top of 1150 was exposed directly beneath the modern fill of the ditch.
- 17 Whether the internal space was divided into separate rooms is unclear as apart from the two slots where the floors were exposed, the original levels of the building were never really reached since later floors restricted the areas that could be looked at. Despite this, towards the eastern end of the building there was a noticeable slope to the floor that may have been caused by the floor slumping either side of some underlying feature, possibly the remnant of a robbed wall.

- This must remain speculative and it may be that Building 8 was a large open building with no internal divisions.
- 18 With regards to the deposits infilling the robber cuts of the stylobate wall, it was observed (by D. Bescoby) in 2002 that cut 1084 was backfilled with a coarse sandy silt (1083) containing pebbles, mortar and shell which contrasts with the predominance of silts and clays on the site and demonstrates a rapid infilling rather than accumulation. The gravel and unusually high marine shell content in the fill (1083) may suggest that the foundations of this structure had been dug deeper into the shingle bank (predicted from geophysics) that is believed to run beneath more recent soils in this area of the Vrina Plain. This would have provided a firmer foundation for structures here compared to the marsh silts elsewhere.
 - 19 In the process of dismantling wall 3941 the eastern end of wall 3982 was also removed.
 - 20 This would seem to correspond to a similar expansion in Butrint: the forum was remodelled/aggrandised at the beginning of the 2nd century AD (Hernandez and Çondi 2008, 286, figs. 8 and 11), whilst the 'Gymnasium', the Well of Junia Rufina, and the bath-house and Peristyle building next to the Forum are all traditionally dated to this century (Karaiskaj 2009, 53; Ugolini 1937, 148–52, 158; Ugolini 1942). See also Hansen 2009, 69–79. The buildings on the southern edge of the Acropolis also seem to have been altered at this time; cf. Greenslade *et al.* 2013, 54–5.
 - 21 Wilson 2013, 77–96.
 - 22 Excavations from the drainage ditch indicated that the 2nd-century AD expansion of the Vrina Plain settlement continued to the east of the aqueduct too; a series of mercantile buildings was located encroaching on the 1st-century cemetery whilst outlying occupation, indicated by a bath-house that is thought to be connected to a villa identified from geophysics, was found towards the Kalivo hill (Crowson and Gilkes 2007, 136–40). Since 2008 the area to the south of this bath-house has been the focus of the Butrint Training School. See Gilkes, Hysa and Çondi (2013, 176–81) for a discussion of the recent findings from this excavation. This area is referred to as the Eastern Residential residence on various figures within this volume. See also Crowson and Gilkes 2007, 140–59 which provides an overview of the 2nd-century tomb structures on the Vrina Plain associated with the expanding population.
 - 23 For the excavations of the Triconch Palace see Bowden and Hodges 2011; for the excavations at the Baptistry see Bowden and Përzhita 2004a, 176–201; for the bridge at Butrint see Leppard 2013, 97–104.

4 Late Imperial: the 3rd and 4th century AD – The archaeology of a channel-side *domus*

Simon Greenslade

Introduction

This chapter will cover the archaeological and structural sequence from the mid-3rd to the mid-4th century AD, a period during which major changes occurred in the nature of the urban occupation on the Vrina Plain (Plate 4.1). The western suburb appears to have come under the control of one individual who constructed a large and spacious *domus* across the area. Defined by the edge of the Vivari Channel to the north, and by a deep inlet channel to the west, and incorporating the former cistern as well as the eastern buildings into its build, this new house was built to impress.

Phase 3a: mid- to late 3rd century AD (Fig. 4.1)

The peristyle courtyard

One of the major excavated features of the *domus* was the northern peristyle courtyard, built over the area originally covered by Buildings 1 and 2; these had been demolished to foundation level prior to its construction.¹ At its centre was a rectangular courtyard measuring 26 m east–west by 16.50 m north–south, surrounded by a stylobate wall (7295/7908) laid over a low foundation (3377/3850/7296/7374) (Fig. 4.2). Today, only elements of the stylobate survive due to later alterations but the original form of the wall can still be seen at the western end of the north stylobate. Here, a series of large limestone slabs (7295) (1.05 × 0.60 × 0.10 m in size) was set over a foundation wall (7296) built with limestone rubble bonded by a light yellow mortar (Fig. 4.3). Measuring 0.60 m wide the wall foundation stood roughly 0.60 m high and had been built directly over the mortar floor (7019/7102) and the demolished eastern wall (7024) of Building 2.

To the east, the stylobate appears to have partially utilised the earlier western road wall as its foundation (7360), with a new wall (3850) built at the southern end where the eastern wall of Building 1 had been dismantled

Table 4.1. Overview of the development of the Vrina Plain settlement: Phase 3a

Phase	Date	Summary
3a	Mid–late 3rd century	Occupation changes: site taken over by a single residence, a large double peristyle <i>domus</i>

(see Fig. 3.11).² Excavations along the western face of wall 3850 identified a construction cut for the wall (3944) 0.21 m deep, dug through the floor surface associated with Building 1 (3895/7222) (Fig. 4.4). Infilling the cut was a mid-grey-coloured sandy silt (3943) containing abundant mortar fragments along with pottery dating from the 1st to 3rd century AD.

Much of the internal space of the courtyard was taken up by an elaborate ornamental water feature comprising two pools, one built inside the other (Fig. 4.5). The outer pool (walls 3822, 7012, 3702, and 7016) was rectangular, with concave sides meeting at points at each corner. Measuring 15 × 7.50 m the walls of the pool were 0.40 m wide and were constructed with regular courses of tile (0.30 × 0.22 × 0.04 m thick) bonded with a pale-yellow mortar. Wall 3822 was constructed with a core of rounded pebbles. On average the walls survive to a height of c. 0.32 m. The northern and western walls of the pool had been built directly onto the earlier make-up surface (7176) and associated mortar floor (7102) of Building 2, these earlier surfaces creating a solid foundation on which to build the new structure; to the east, where there was no similar solid base, the foundation of wall 3702 was much deeper, extending 0.43 m below the level of the pool's surface.

Internally the outer pool was floored with a layer of *opus signinum* (3872/7011/7015). In the western corner the floor was damaged, exposing the compacted limestone surface (7256/7176) of Building 2 onto which the floor had been laid. A slight cut between the inner face of the wall and

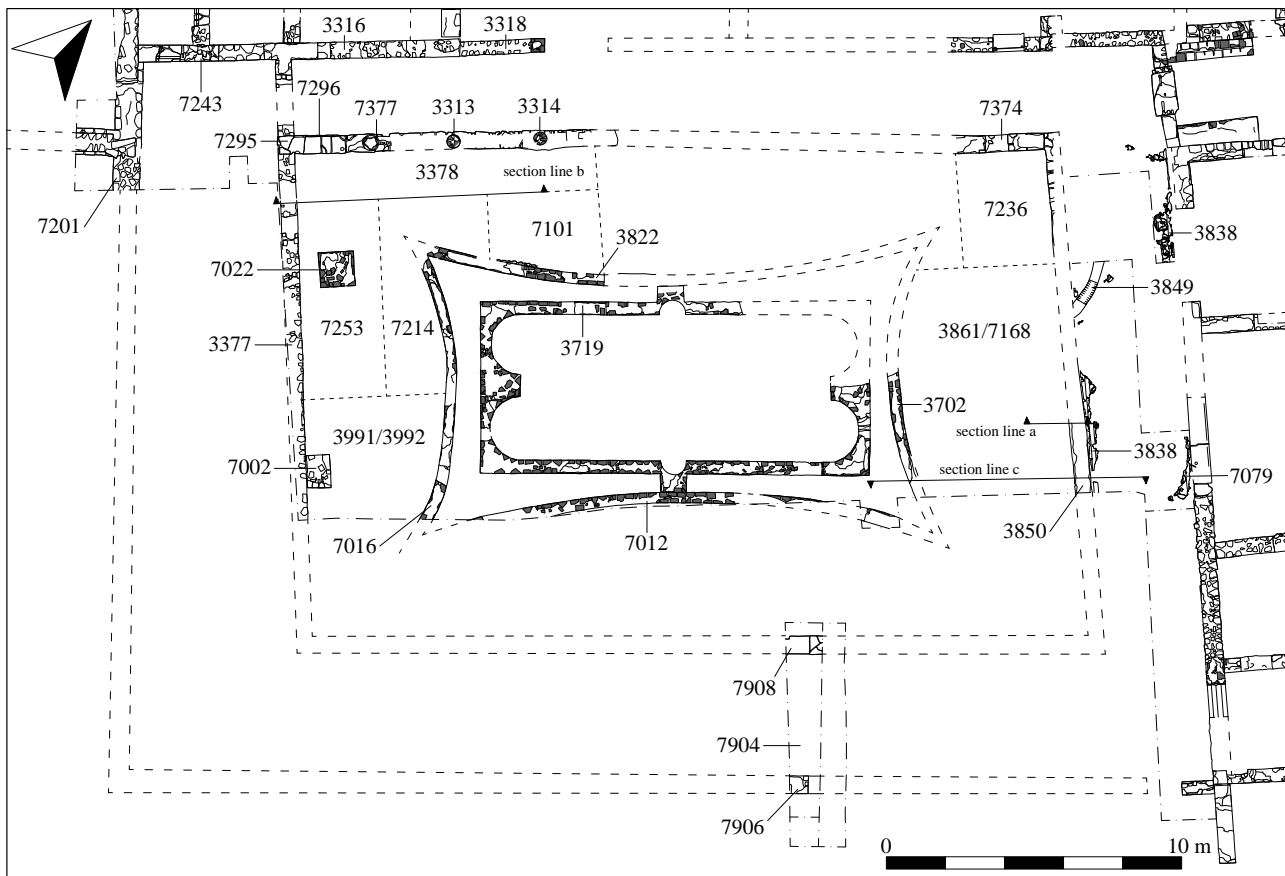


Figure 4.2. The peristyle courtyard

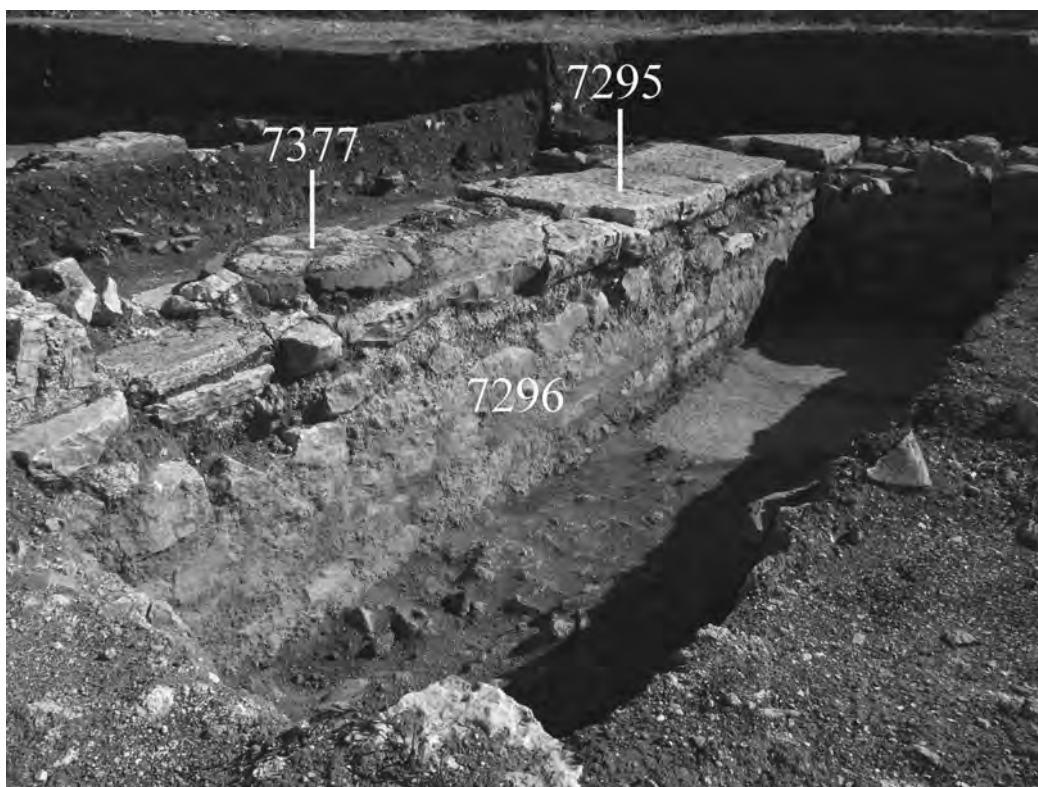


Figure 4.3. The western end of the north stylobate showing the foundation wall 7296, the overlying slabs 7295, and column base 7377 after the removal of the deposits infilling the portico

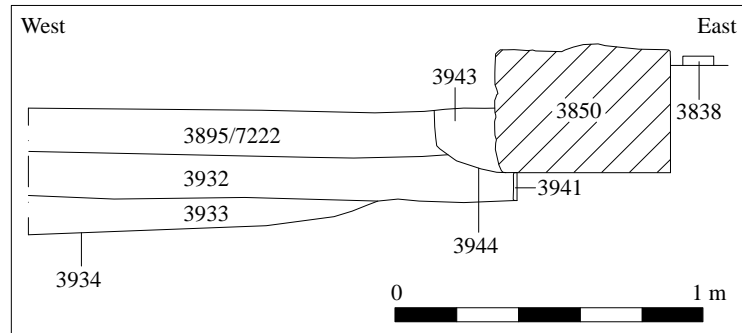


Figure 4.4. South-facing section showing the construction cut (3944) of wall 3850 cutting the earlier Phase 2 (2nd to early 3rd century) floor surface of Building 1. See Fig. 4.2 for location, section line a



Figure 4.5. View of the courtyard and pool, looking east. The wall and foundation of the Phase 1 (mid-1st to early 2nd century) Building 2 can be seen below the pool while the southern apse of the Phase 7 (early 6th century) basilica covers the pool's northeastern corner (2 m scale)

5.25 m, at which point it was built into the northwestern corner of the surrounding stylobate foundations (7296 and 3377). The construction of the drain and these foundations appears to have been contemporary as where the drain went through wall 7296 the edge of the gap had been built in tile and the core of the wall beyond had been lined, while a gap 0.50 m wide had been built into wall 3377 to allow the drain to continue through it.

Beyond wall 7296 the drain (as 7230/7229) continued across the northern end of the west portico (Fig. 4.8). Unlike in the courtyard, here the drain had been built within a construction cut (7233) dug through a thick levelling deposit of yellowish-brown silty clay (7235/7327). Frequent fragments of painted wall plaster, coloured white and red,



Figure 4.6. The Phase 3a ornamental pool, looking west. The northeastern apse of the inner pool can partially be seen at the base of the Phase 14 (late 12th–13th century) robber cut 3265 within the apse of the Phase 7 (early 6th century) basilica (2 m scale)



Figure 4.7. The outlet drain 7161 running diagonally from the northwest corner of the outer pool. The drain visible within the pool is a later addition related to Phase 5

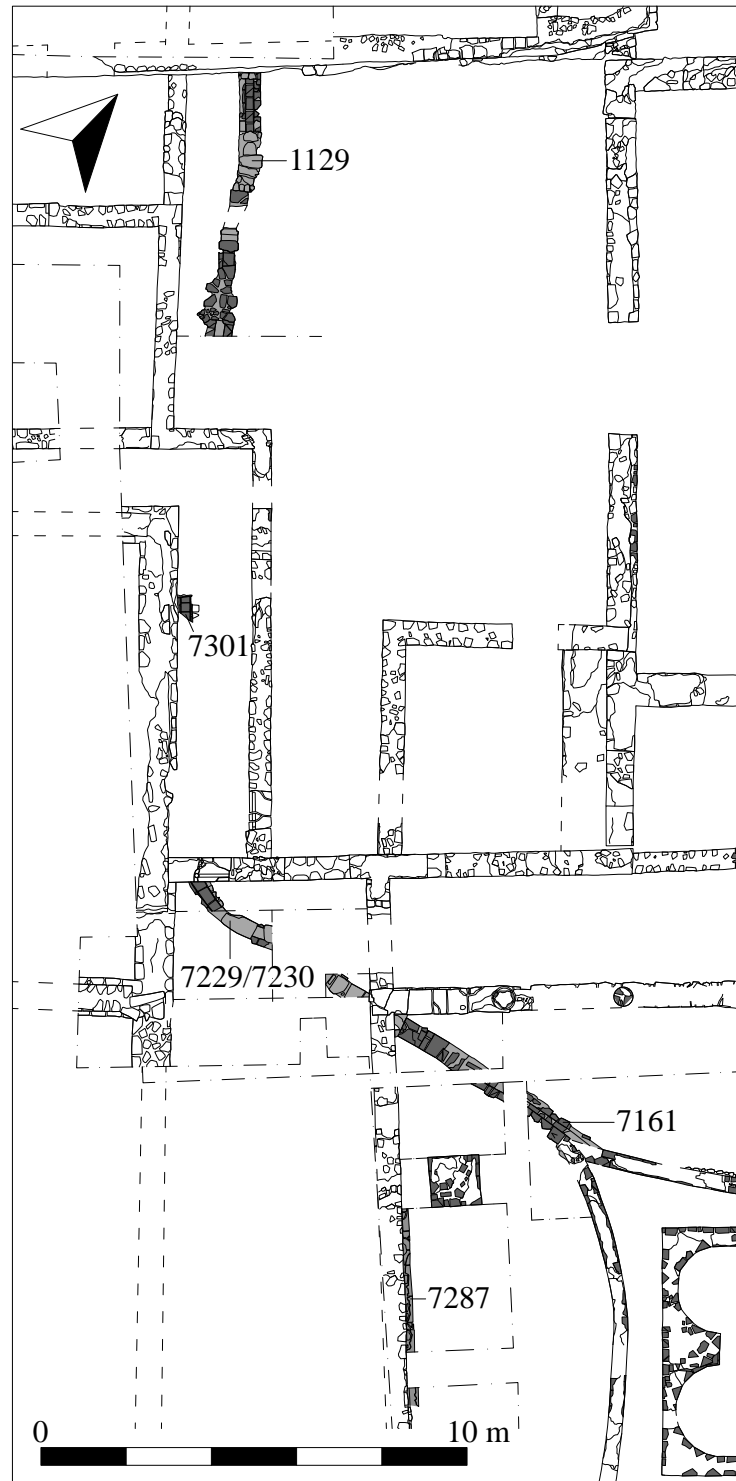


Figure 4.8. Plan showing the alignment of drains 7161/7230/7229/7301/1129 and 7287

were found mixed throughout 7235, the plaster presumably having come from the walls of the earlier buildings that were demolished prior to the construction of the *domus*. The walls of drain 7230/7229 were *c.* 0.40 m in height and were built from a mix of tile and limestone bonded with a gritty yellow mortar. Rectangular tiles formed the base of the drain while a series of large limestone slabs (7228) (varying in size from $0.51 \times 0.51 \times 0.10$ m to 0.28×0.51

$\times 0.10$ m) capped it. The westernmost capstone abutted the southern face of wall 3316/7243. Below this stone was a rectangular gap (0.32 m wide and 0.50 m in height) built into wall 7243. Lined with tiles at its base, the gap allowed the drainwater to flow through the wall and indicates that the pools, drain and peristyle were all contemporary. From here the drain continued on under the western wing of the house (7301), and the western bath-house (1129), before

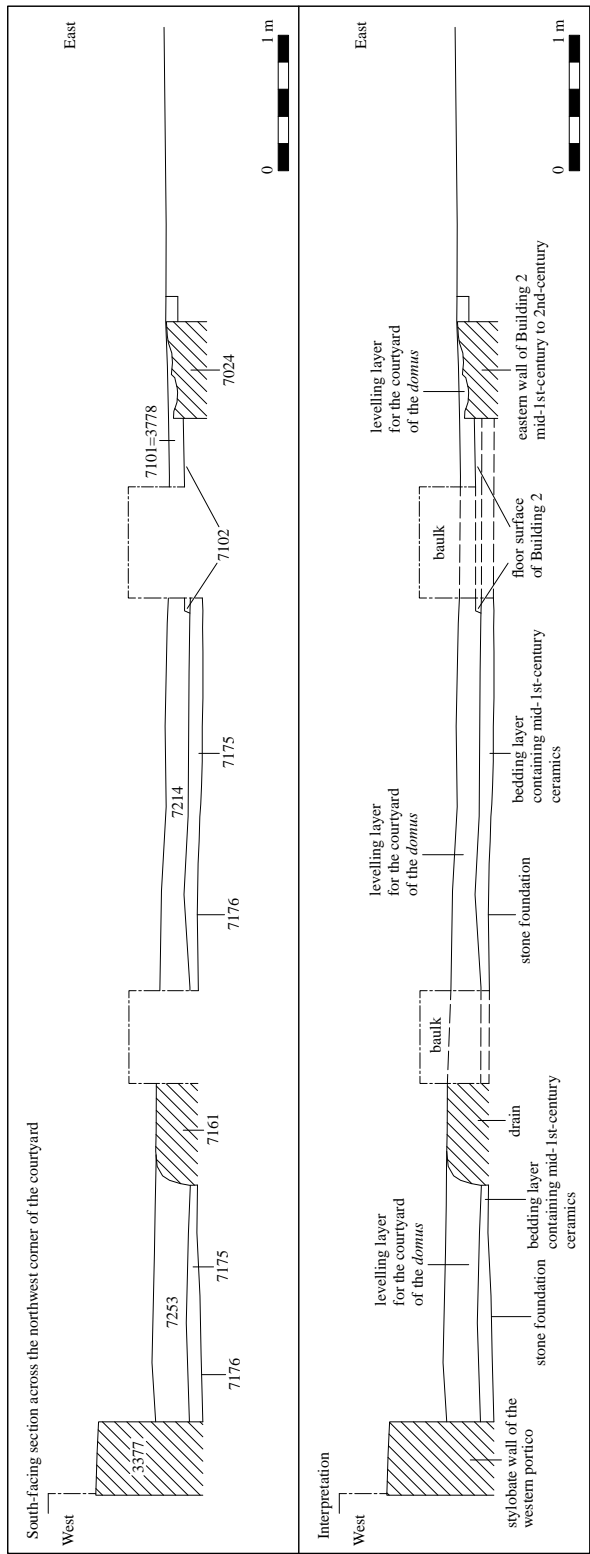


Figure 4.9. South-facing section across the northwest corner of the courtyard showing the levelling layers used to create it. See Fig. 4.2 for location, section line b

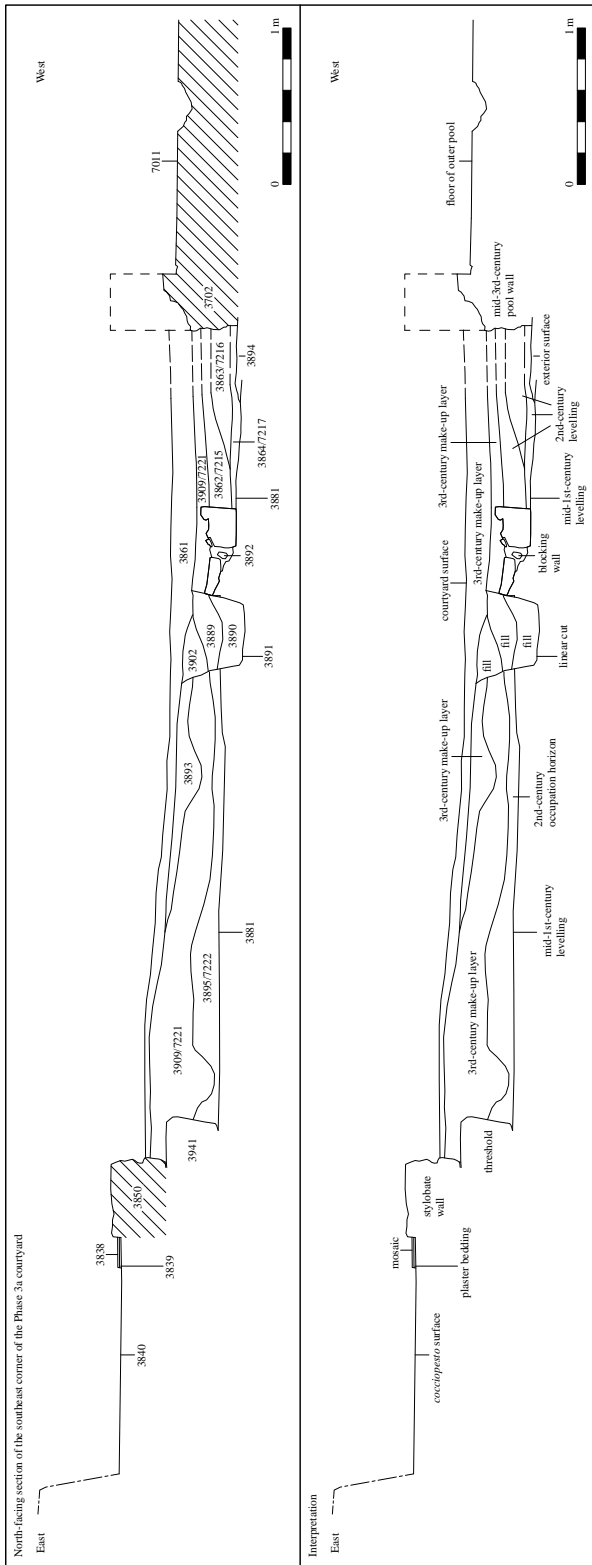


Figure 4.10. North-facing section across the southeast corner of the courtyard showing the levelling layers used to create it. See Fig. 4.2 for location, section line c

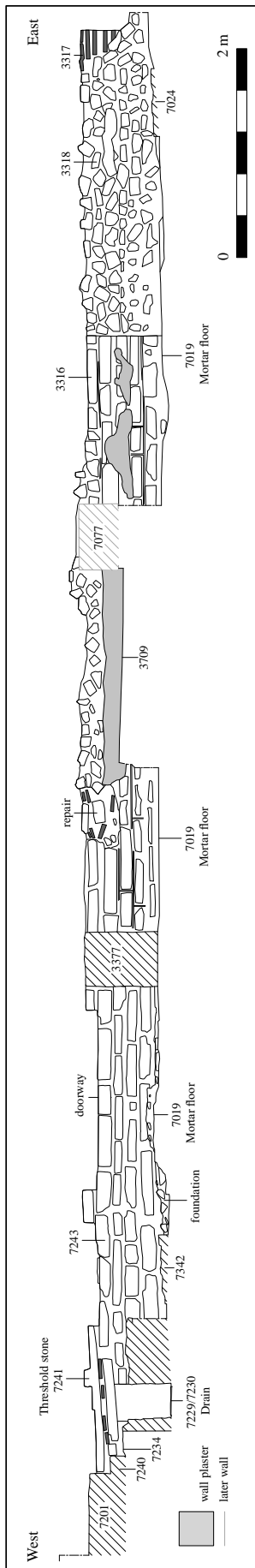


Figure 4.11. South-facing elevation of the rear wall of the north portico showing walls 3316/7243 and 3318

draining into the Vivari Channel; the drain has a drop of almost 0.40 m along its length.⁴

Along the western side of the courtyard, elements of a further contemporary drain (7287), formed from curved pinkish ceramic tiles (*c.* 0.75 m in length) set end-to-end, was found running along the base of wall 3377. The southern end of the drain was damaged but it is assumed that it would have continued along the line of wall 3377 beyond the southern limit of the excavations, suggesting a further water feature may have been located in the southwest corner of the courtyard. At its northern end drain 7287 appears originally to have been connected to the outlet drain of the pools, although at some point this connection was blocked-off when a tile was placed over the northern end of 7287.

Following the construction of the stylobate, the central pools and associated outlet drain, and the completion of the western drain, the interior space of the courtyard was levelled over (see Fig. 4.2).⁵ To the west of the pools this levelling is represented by a single greyish-green clay silt (3778/7101/7214/7253/3991/3992) (Fig. 4.9). Varying in thickness from 0.06 m to 0.28 m, this layer contained a mix of occasional small sub-angular fragments of limestone, tile fragments and mortar patches. To the northeast of the pools, in a series of slots dug below the southern end of the eastern aisle of the Phase 7 basilica, deposit 7236 was equated to the courtyard level. Ceramics recovered from these layers dated to the 2nd and 3rd century, with the latest being mid-3rd century (in 3778, 7214 and 7236), providing a *terminus post quem* for the deposition of this material.

To the east, due to the lower level of Building 1, a series of deposits was used to infill the area in order to bring it to a consistent level (Fig. 4.10). Initially the area enclosed by the dismantled walls of Building 1 was backfilled. A mid-grey clay silt, 0.15–0.20 m thick, was spread across the area (3909/7221), sealing wall 3941. Overlying this was a light brownish-grey silty sand (3893). Towards the west, this deposit had been cut by a north–south linear trench (3891/7220) ($3 \times 0.55 \times 0.40$ m), the eastern edge of which had been dug against the inner faces of walls 3892 and 7174. The reason for this trench is unclear as it appears that soon after it was dug it was deliberately backfilled with the up-cast from its initial digging. The primary infill was a mid-grey sandy silt (3890/7219), overlying which was a mid-greyish-brown sandy-clay silt (3889/7218) containing 1st- and early to mid-3rd-century ceramics; the final infill was a greyish-brown sandy silt deposit which was composed of *c.* 80% crushed shell fragments (3902). Following this, the northern end of wall 3892, which remained visible through 3909/7221, was removed. This cut (3927) partially truncated the western edge of cut 3891/7220. As part of this robbing activity, it appears that further stones were removed from the southern end of the western wall of Building 1 (robber cut 7213). These cuts were backfilled with a pale yellowish-grey mix of crushed mortar, sand and limestone rubble (3926 and 7212 respectively), presumably residue from the dismantled walls. Following this, the whole area between the stylobate wall 3850 and the eastern wall of the outer pool 3702 was infilled with a thick layer of light brownish-grey clay silt (3861/7168). Sealing Building 1 and containing a mixed ceramic assemblage covering the early 1st to mid-3rd century AD, along with a worn *sestertius* of Commodus (AD 190–91) (SF 6205/Cat. 56), this deposit is thought to be the courtyard level.⁶

There was no evidence that the courtyard had ever been paved, but patches of loose gravel found overlying 7101 would seem to suggest that narrow paths originally surrounded the pools. These paths were possibly defined by low hedges. To the west of the pool was a square tile-built block (7022) measuring 1.20 m². Situated in the northwest corner of the courtyard, this block may have formed the base for a statue or other garden ornament (see Fig. 4.2). All four sides of the block had been rendered with a thin skim of mortar, presumably to create the impression the block was made of marble.

Surrounding the courtyard was a *quadroporticus*. Apart from the east portico, which utilised the western face of Building 4 as its rear wall, the other three



Figure 4.12. Western end of the north portico showing walls 3316/7243 and 3318. The foundation (7375) of wall 3318 can be seen cut through the mortar floor (7019) of the Phase 1 Building 2 (2 m scale)



Figure 4.13. Aerial view of the Vrina Plain domus excavations looking west towards Cape Stillo and the Straits of Corfu beyond

sides of the portico required the construction of new walls, all of which were built as integral parts of the newly planned *domus*. The rear wall of the west portico formed a continuation of the eastern wall of the newly built marine entrance (7201), while the south portico wall (7906) opened onto a series of rooms and corridors which allowed access to a second courtyard beyond.⁷ The wall of the north portico divided the house in two, with the public side to the north of it and the more private areas arranged along the other three sides.

The rear wall of the north portico appears to have been built in two stages (Fig. 4.11). The initial build was wall 3316/7243 at the western end of the portico. This substantial wall (10.88×0.55 m wide) was constructed from a mix of rectangular and sub-rectangular limestone

blocks ($0.36 \times 0.17 \times 0.10$ m) and was bonded with a mid-yellowish-brown mortar, which in places had been scored with horizontal and vertical lines around the larger stones. Built abutting the eastern wall of the marine entrance, wall 3316/7243 extended as far as wall 3321, the western wall of Building 8.

From this point a narrower wall (0.46 m wide) was constructed (3318). Built with angular limestone blocks (averaging $0.20 \times 0.18 \times 0.12$ m) bonded with a light-yellowish gritty mortar, wall 3318 is thought to have extended along the whole northern side of the portico (c.19.65 m), with the eastern end of the wall being indicated by wall 7393 (see Fig. 4.1). Due to its narrowness the wall was built on a wide, offset foundation formed partially by the line of the now-levelled boundary wall 7344 and also by a new wall (7375) built along the southern edge of 7344, which was cut through the mortar floor (7019) of Building 2 (Fig. 4.12). Walls 3316/7243 and 3318 are thought to be contemporary as both were built prior to the infilling of the portico. The difference in construction technique may imply wall 3318 did not carry the same load as 3316/7243, with the narrower wall perhaps forming a partition between the portico and the rooms behind it. Doorways set within the wall, as indicated by the threshold stone 7241 to the west and the tile end (3317) of the wall 3318 to the east, provided a means of access to these rooms from the portico.

Keyed into wall 3316 was the northern continuation of wall 3377, which to the south formed the foundation wall of the western stylobate. Here it extended 0.50 m from the southern face of wall 3316 before ending and continuing at floor level as a foundation across the portico, in the process forming a division between the north and west porticoes.

All four porticoes varied in width. The narrowest was the north portico, which varied from 2.80 m at its eastern end to c. 2.60 m at its western end. The east portico was slightly wider at c. 3.50 m along its entire length, while the south portico was wider than both of these being 4.10 m across. The widest was the west portico, measuring 4.75 m. Built on the edge of a deep inlet channel, this portico, unlike the others that gave access to the various rooms of the villa, seems to have formed an open gallery offering wide-angled views of Cape Stillo and the Straits of Corfu beyond (Fig. 4.13). Its position would also have provided a contrast between the natural landscape on the one side and the man-made pool on the other, a situation even more accentuated when viewed from the eastern portico where the view would have been framed by the architectural elements of the peristyle.

Little trace of the colonnades of the peristyle survives apart from the lowest courses of three masonry columns 0.45 m in diameter, found *in situ* at the western end of the north stylobate (Fig. 4.14; cf. Fig. 5.21).⁸ These columns (3313, 3314 and 7377) were constructed using tiles cut into triangular forms bonded with a greyish-white gritty mortar containing small shell and gravel inclusions. The columns are separated by a distance of 2.50 m; assuming this

intercolumniation and construction technique continued around the entire colonnade, it can be suggested that along with columns in each of the four corners of the quadrangle, eight columns would have been situated along the northern



Figure 4.14. Column base 7377 (30 cm scale)

and southern porticoes with five along the eastern and western ones.

The porticoes were originally floored with a series of mosaic pavements of geometric design set slightly below the level of the surrounding stylobate. Unfortunately these floors had been badly damaged in antiquity with the only remnant of flooring found being from the east portico where a few scattered fragments of the border and central motif survived around the sides of the room (3838/7079) (Fig. 4.15; see also Plate 10.1) (for the full description of this mosaic see Chapter 10). The mosaic had been bedded onto a layer of pinkish mortar (3840) which ran the length of the portico. This had been laid over a make-up layer of thick green clay (7338) which had been used to raise the level of the portico, sealing the earlier road surface (7339) over which it had been built.

A similar pink mortar surface was located within the slot dug across the south portico (7904) (Fig. 4.16). Pressed into 7904 were a number of fragments of worked marble. These may just be random pieces, possibly waste cuts from veneers used to decorate one of the surrounding rooms that had been dumped and became mixed into the make-up for the overlying floor, but equally the marble may have been deliberately set into the mortar to form a feature or design within the overlying pavement. Along the northern side of the portico, up against the southern edge



Figure 4.15. Detail of the border of mosaic 3838 along the eastern side of the east portico



Figure 4.16. The south portico showing the bedding layer 7904 (1 m scale)

Figure 4.17. Cross-section showing the height difference between the courtyard, porticoes and surrounding rooms of the domus in Phase 3a

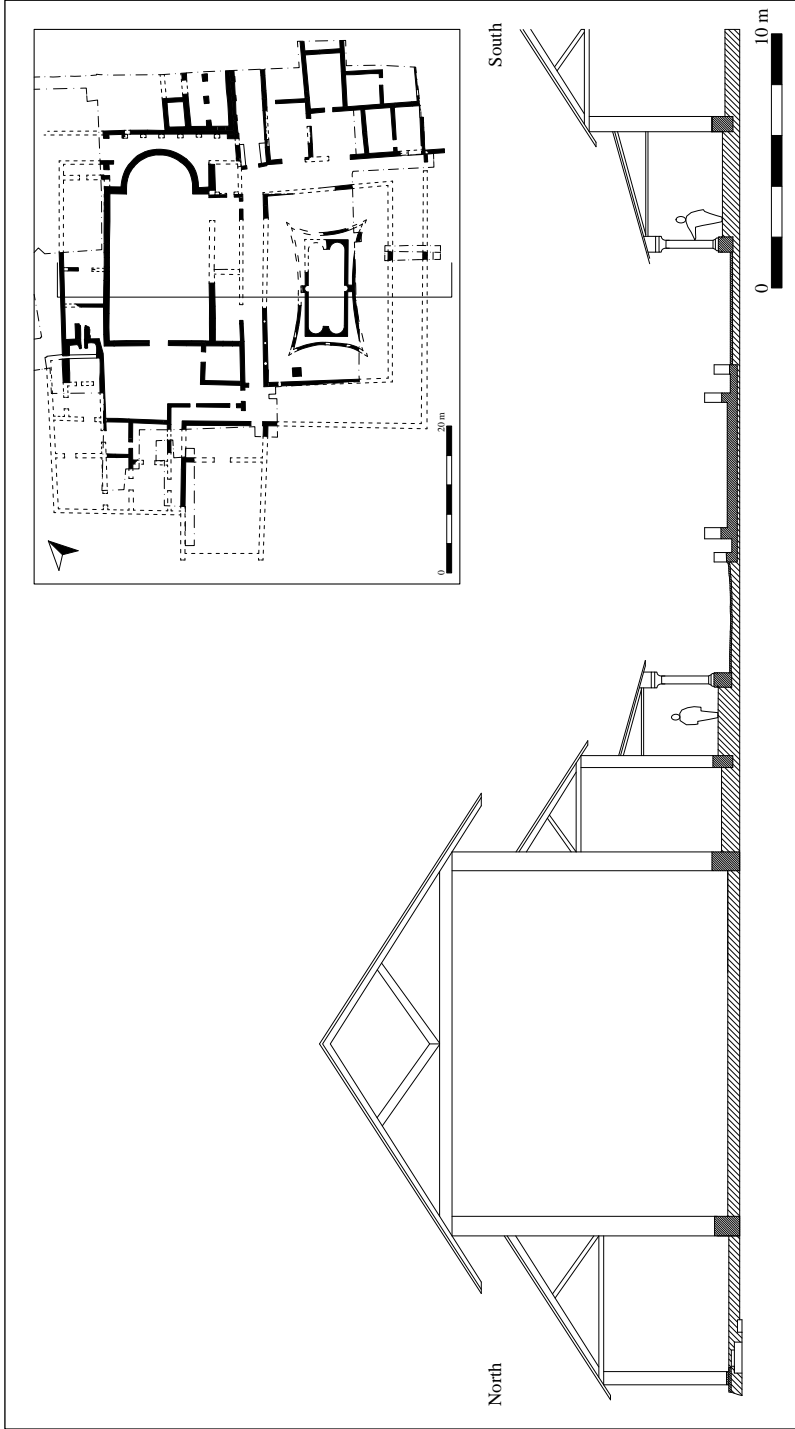
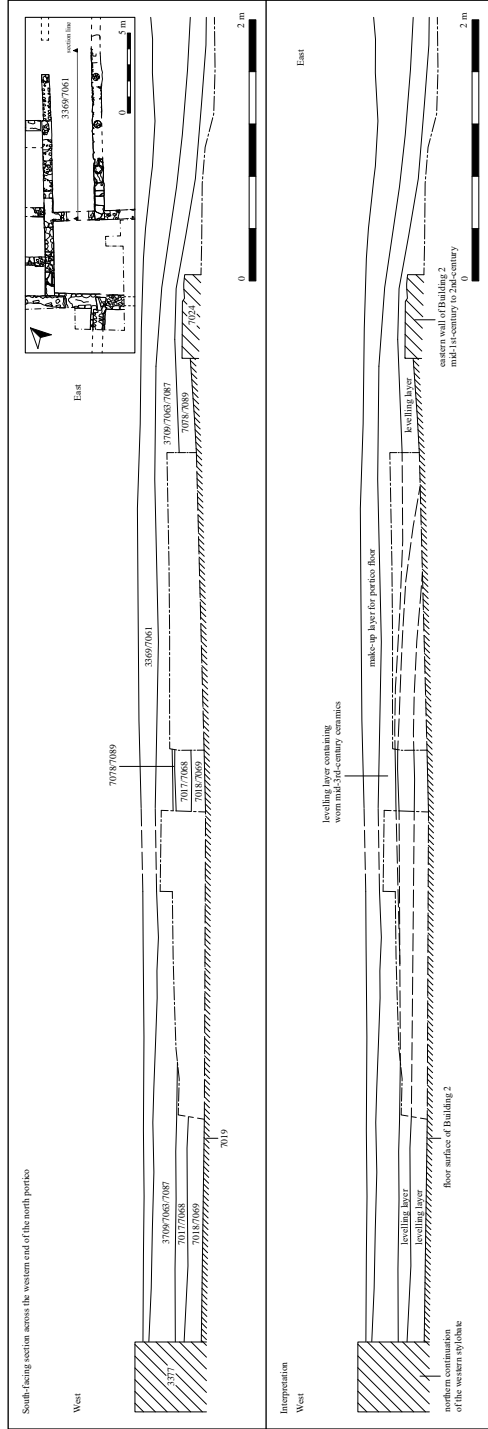


Figure 4.18. South-facing section across the western end of the north portico



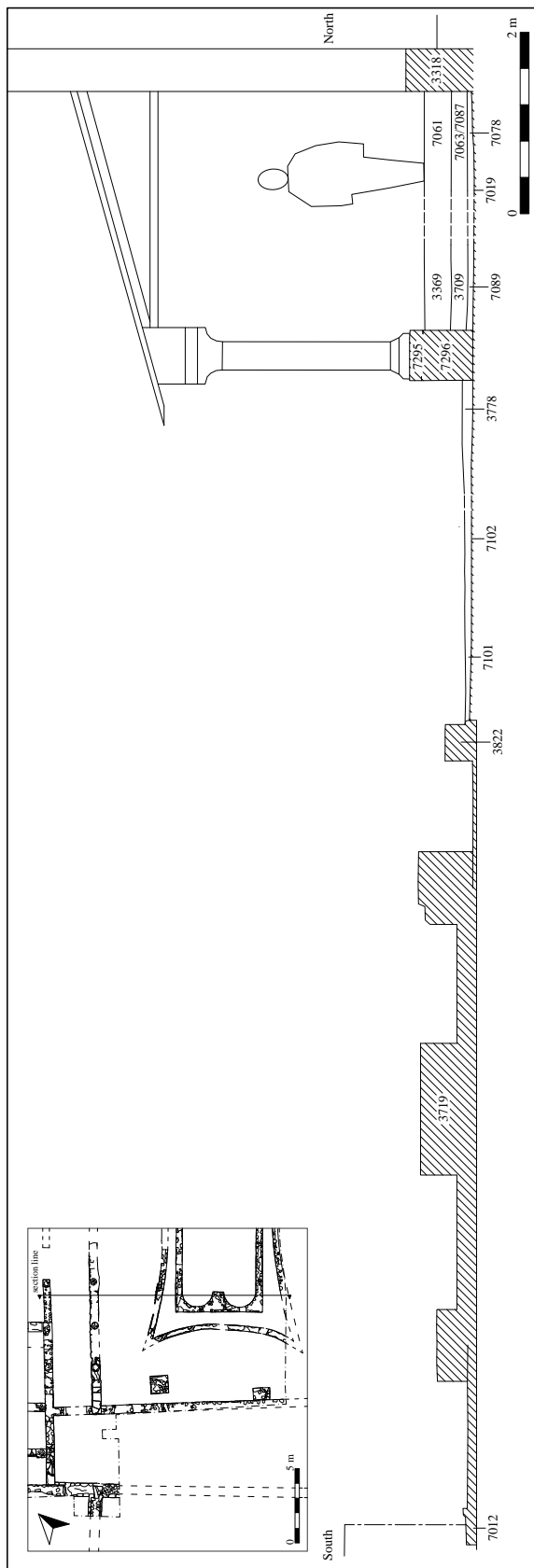


Figure 4.19. Cross-section of the Phase 3a courtyard and north portico showing the layers infilling the portico

of the south stylobate (7908), the mortar had slumped into an underlying feature suggesting a possible wall line associated with the earlier western suburb had been removed prior to the laying of the floor.

At the northern end of the west portico the floor had been removed although a layer of compacted water-worn cobbles (7232/7234), found along the eastern edge of wall 7240 and forming the southern edge of the outlet drain (7229/7230), is thought to have formed part of the foundation for the original surface (see Fig. 4.31).

A comparison of the levels of these various surfaces with that of the courtyard appears to indicate that the floors of the porticoes were between 0.30 m and 0.50 m higher than the level of the courtyard. This height difference would have meant that guests strolling along the shaded porticoes would have been able to look directly into the central pools (Fig. 4.17). Guests would have been able to access the courtyard from the porticoes via doorways incorporated into the surrounding stylobate walls. The foundation of a step (7002) (1.12 × 0.79 m wide) for one of these doorways was found towards the southern end of the foundation of the western stylobate (3377), overlying the surface of the courtyard.

Dating evidence for the construction of the porticoes is limited and relies largely upon the excavations carried out at the western end of the north portico. Due to the lack of flooring, the entire end of the portico could be examined, revealing the sequence of layers which had been deliberately used to infill it (Fig. 4.18). The primary infill deposit was 7018/7069, a light yellowish-brown mixed sandy mortar. Found along the northern edge of the space, it banked up against the inner face of wall 3316 and sloped to the south, though it did not reach the northern face of the stylobate foundation 7296. Sealing this deposit was 7017/7068, a compacted brown silt containing large amounts of small to medium angular and sub-angular limestone chippings. It followed the slope of the underlying deposit, varying in depth from 0.02 m to 0.15 m. Overlying this was 7078/7089, a light greyish-yellow sandy silt that also covered the remnant of the dismantled wall (7024) of Building 2. Above this was 3709/7063/7087, an olive-green silty clay containing small to medium sub-angular limestone fragments along with some broken tile pieces. This deposit covered the entire length of the corridor excavated (c. 10 m) and was thicker to the south where it infilled the slope of the underlying deposits.⁹ A large amount of painted wall plaster was recovered from this deposit. A second, slightly paler green silty clay (3369/7061) (c. 0.15–0.25 m thick) was then spread over 3709/7063/7087 to form the make-up level for the floor of the portico, the upper level of 3369/7061 matching that of the base of the limestone slabs 7295 of the north stylobate (Fig. 4.19).

Along with fragments of a 5th-century BC Attic base, Hellenistic and 1st-century AD ceramics, these

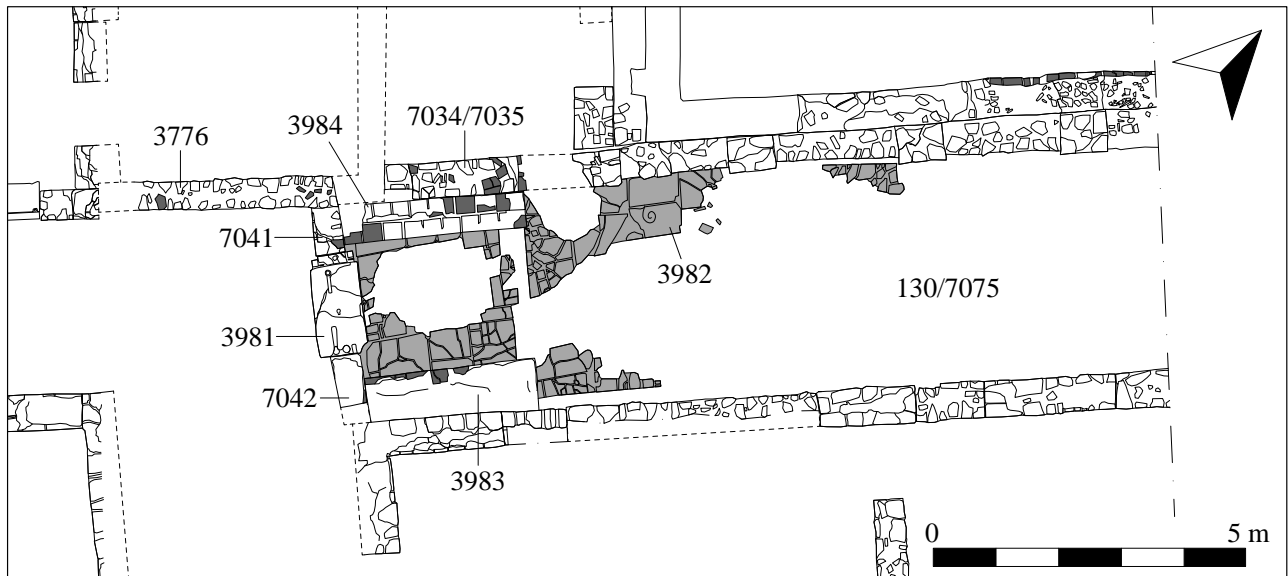


Figure 4.20. The eastern road entrance

deposits also contained pottery dating to the 2nd and 3rd century AD. Of these, 3709 produced a number of very worn fragments of early to mid-3rd-century AD pottery, while layers 7063 and 7061 both contained pieces dated to the mid-3rd century. This material, combined with that recovered from the courtyard levelling which has a similar date range, would seem to indicate that the construction of the *domus* dates to the second half of the 3rd century AD.¹⁰

The eastern road entrance

The house was entered by two opposing doorways. The eastern entrance fronted onto the former east–west road of the suburb (Fig. 4.20). This had been levelled over with a grey silty clay (7085), 0.10 m thick and a greenish-brown silty clay (130/7075), 0.25 m to 0.30 m thick, and then repaved with a new flagstone pavement (3982) consisting of large limestone slabs roughly 1×0.60 m in size and varying in thickness from 50 mm to 80 mm (Fig. 4.21).¹¹ This ‘new’ road led only to the eastern entrance of the *domus*, as a wall (7034/7035) was constructed across the southern end of the road that had led to the Vivari Channel. The southern valley road meanwhile had been built over by the east portico of the new *domus*. The entranceways of the earlier Phase 1 and 2 shops along the northern frontage of Building 4 were also blocked at this time (see below).

The eastern entrance measured 1.64 m wide and was defined by walls 7041 and 7042 (Fig. 4.22). Originally the doorway seems to have had an ornamental lintel as a number of tiles with decorative egg and dart and denticulated mouldings on their edges were found in the overlying deposits within this area.

The door’s northern side wall (7041) was located just to the east of the aqueduct offshoot pier 7356. It was

built with roughly cut limestone blocks interspersed with horizontal courses of tile and measured 0.82×0.50 m. The southern side wall (7042) (1.03×0.50 m wide) was built in a similar style and abutted the northwest corner of the earlier Building 4. A large rectangular limestone block (3981) ($1.46 \times 0.78 \times 0.08$ m) formed the threshold of the doorway (Fig. 4.23); this was placed on top of a heavily mortared foundation (7358).¹² The threshold stone was not quite wide enough for the doorway as a gap 0.18 m wide existed between its northern edge and the southern face of 7041. To compensate for this smaller stones were used to infill the gap.

Along the southern edge of 3981 a circular groove was observed, worn into the stone. A similar groove was also visible in the central packing stone on the north side of the threshold. From their location and signs of wear these grooves are thought to indicate the position of the main doors of the entrance, the grooves having been formed by the wear of the doors’ pivot hinges. A further key-hole-shaped cut through the threshold stone 3981 was visible between these outer grooves, presumably to hold the bolt used to secure the doors when they were closed. The distance between the bolt hole and the door frame suggests the doors were not of equal width, the northern door being *c.* 0.85 m wide while the southern door would have been *c.* 0.65 m. Wear observed on the threshold stone itself appears to indicate that guests used the southern door to enter the house.

Two further pivot holes were noticed along the western edge of 3981. These were both well-worn and may suggest that the doors had to be re-hung at some point. However, as they did not appear to relate to the central bolt-hole, this may suggest that 3981 had been re-used and that it had originally formed the threshold to one of the buildings of Phase 1 or 2. This salvaging of material from an earlier

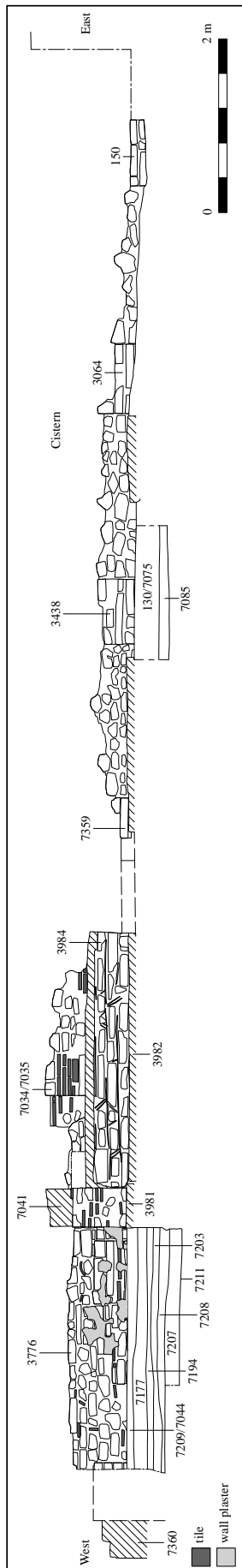


Figure 4.21. South-facing elevation through the eastern entrance of the domus and road beyond showing the deposits used to raise the level of the area



Figure 4.22. The eastern road entrance, looking west (1 m scale)

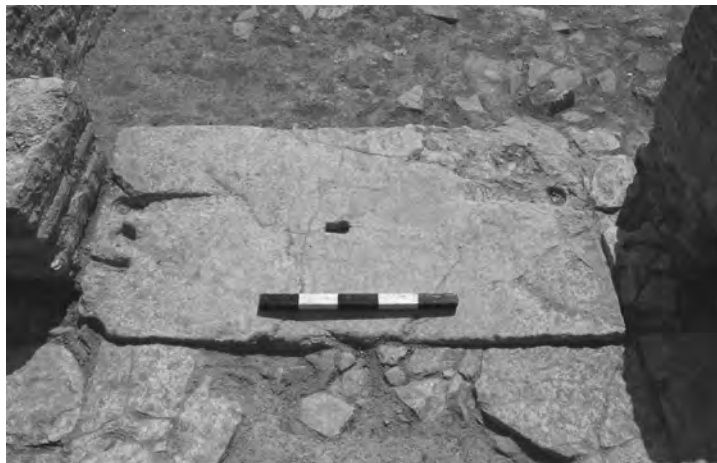


Figure 4.23. Threshold stone 3981 (50 cm scale)



Figure 4.24. The northern bench 3984 flanking the eastern entrance of the domus

building may also explain why 3981 did not fit the new doorway.

Flanking the outside of the doorway and overlying the flagstones of the road were two benches, built presumably to accommodate visitors (see Fig. 4.22). The southern bench (3983) measured $2.73 \times 0.64 \times 0.38$ m, while the northern bench (3984) measured $2.93 \times 0.57 \times 0.40$ m. Both were constructed from irregular-shaped and roughly finished limestone blocks, bonded with a white mortar which had been spread liberally across the sides of the benches. Whilst still wet, wavy lines had been scored into the mortar between the stone courses along with a series of short diagonal lines between the stones (Fig. 4.24). The tops of the benches were covered by square tiles (0.28 m^2). The imprints of these could be seen on the northern bench, with some of the tiles remaining *in situ* along its northern edge.

For guests visiting the owner, access from this entrance led directly into the eastern end of the north portico. This space had been infilled with a series of clay silt deposits (7203, 7194, and 7177) through which the foundations of the door had been cut. With the completion of the door, a further levelling deposit of clay (7209/7044) had been laid to raise the level of the space to that of threshold 3981 (see Fig. 4.21). As part of these alterations, the earlier northern wall of this space (7355) was removed and replaced by wall 3776 (see Fig. 6.16). This new wall blocked in the doorway that had previously accessed both Building 3 and Building 8 and also sealed the westernmost piers of the earlier *diverticulum* (7356 and 7357). White wall plaster was spread over these walls, covering the various blockings. This plaster was put on prior to the laying of the levelling deposit 7209/7044.

The western marine entrance

The second entrance was situated at the northern end of the west portico (Fig. 4.25). It was constructed on a well-built foundation (7240) roughly 0.90 m wide and comprised two rooms (Fig. 4.26). The eastern room measured 10.55×4.40 m and was defined by walls 7150, 7201, 7307 and 7302. A doorway 1.75 m wide in the southeast corner of the room provided access to the north portico.

This room appears to have been lavishly decorated as traces of a bluish-grey marble veneer (30 mm thick) remained *in situ* attached to the inner faces of walls 7150 and 7302. In addition, the floor had been paved with a well-made geometric mosaic pavement (7306) comprising rhombuses and four-petal blossoms surrounded by a border of diamonds separated by interlocking knots (Fig. 4.27; see also Plate 10.2) (for the full description of this mosaic see Chapter 10).

Due to time constraints only the northern edge of the western room was excavated, the aim being to try and uncover the building's western return by following its northern foundation (7150). In all, a trench 11.40 m in length by 1.20 m wide was excavated from the northeast

corner of the room. Despite this, the return remained elusive as wall 7150, although severely truncated and dropping in height almost 0.80 m along its entire length with its western end being 1.10 m below the present ground level, continued beyond the trench extent (Fig. 4.28).¹³

Internally, part of a *cocciopesto* floor was uncovered at the eastern end of the room (7304) (Fig. 4.29). Covering an area measuring 2.50×1.07 m, the western end of the floor had been damaged, exposing the rubble platform (7330) over which the floor had been laid. This rubble layer extended 1.30 m before it too was truncated, revealing a thick layer of blackish-grey mixed clay and sand beneath (7331). This levelling deposit, which had been spread across the internal space of the room following the construction of the foundations, formed a barrier between the floor's foundation and the underlying channel sediments; these were partially exposed at the western end of the trench.

Recent environmental work shows that the shoreline of the Vivari Channel along the western side of the house formed a broad subsidiary inlet channel which extended to the south (Fig. 4.30).¹⁴ The location of the western room appears to front onto the edge of this inlet channel, the room extending out into the deeper open water. Given the depth of the water, the room would have been accessible by boat, with boats able to moor alongside the building. If this was the case, it implies that these rooms, together with the richly decorated eastern room, created an imposing marine entrance to the new *domus*.¹⁵

The construction of the marine entrance also resulted in the ground surface along this side of the channel edge being raised. Excavations along the southern side of the eastern room of the complex indicated that the foundation of wall 7307 was over 0.40 m above the level of the mortar floor surface (7343) of Building 2 (Phase 1). To the south of wall 7307, a dark-grey silty clay (7313) was revealed matching the level of the wall's foundation. Although no dating evidence was recovered from 7313, the fact that this layer partially covered the offset foundation suggests it is contemporary and represents the new ground level outside the building.

The north wing

These buildings were accessed from the northern end of the west portico via two doorways built into wall 7243 (see Fig. 4.25). The eastern door seems to have been the main access route to the apsidal hall located to the northeast (see below), while the western door accessed a corridor that ran around the eastern and northern sides of the marine entrance, defined by walls 7292 and 7291 (Fig. 4.31). A large threshold stone (7241) ($1.40 \times 0.64 \times 0.17$ m), positioned at the western end of wall 7243, demarcated the entrance to this corridor. The sill of the door was along the southern edge of the stone indicating that the door opened into the corridor. Two further doorways had been built into 7292 at either end of the wall; these provided access to an open courtyard located directly in front of the apsidal hall.

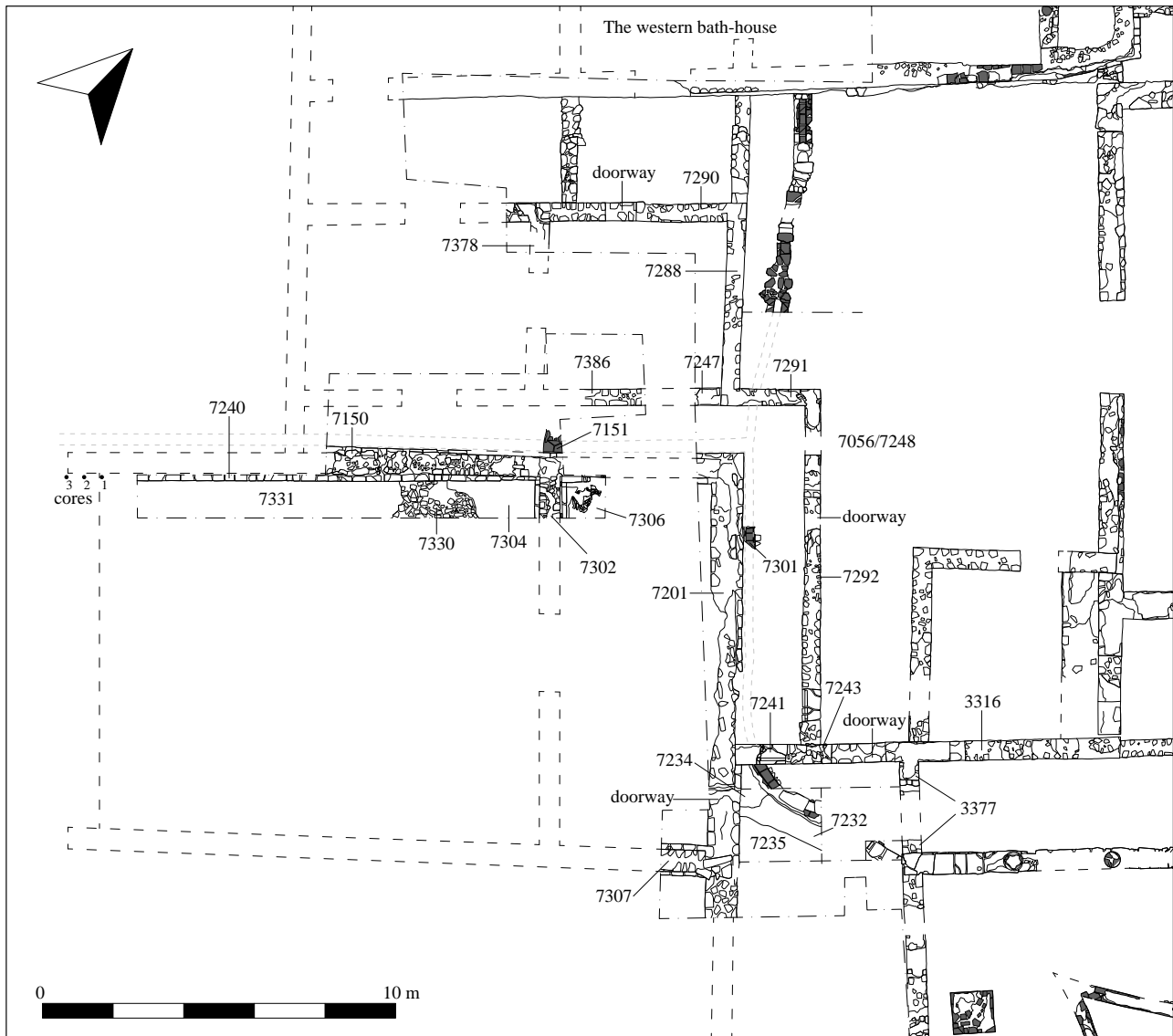


Figure 4.25. The western marine entrance and north wing.

The corridor was built at the same time as the north portico since the eastern wall 7292 had been keyed into the northern face of wall 7243. The corridor measured 8.25 m in length north–south and turned to the west at the northeast corner of the marine entrance. The northern part of the corridor was exposed for c. 6.25 m, at which point it had been truncated by the construction of an octagonal tower associated with the alterations to this part of the house in Phase 3b (see below).

The corridor had a *cocciopesto* surface (7056/7248). Along the western side of the north–south section of the corridor the floor had been laid over a drain (7301) (0.45 m in depth) that is assumed to be the continuation of the outlet drain from the pools within the courtyard. The western side of the drain was constructed from tiles (0.26 m² × 40 mm thick) placed on edge and set against the side of the foundation of the marine entrance, while the eastern side was built with angular and sub-angular limestone blocks.

Square tiles (0.22 m²) lined the base of the drain, with smaller tile fragments placed along the eastern edge. The drain had then been capped with limestone slabs.

A further drain (7151) was located below the northern part of the corridor. As with 7301, this drain had also been built against the foundation of the marine entrance, although this time without a tile facing to it, the southern side of the drain utilising the face of the foundation as its edge. How this drain worked in relation to the eastern drain 7301 is unclear as the connection between the two lies below the floor of the corridor (7248), but it is assumed that they would have been connected (see Fig. 4.25).

The northern part of the corridor led to two rooms. The eastern wall of the east room (7288) was keyed into wall 7291 and followed the line of the eastern wall of the marine entrance, while the southern wall of the room (7247/7386) was built against the junction of walls 7291 and 7288. The construction and alignment of wall 7288 meant the space



Figure 4.26. The marine entrance, looking west (2×1 m and 30 cm scales)

to the east in front of the apsidal hall widened at this point. Virtually nothing of the west room survives as the octagonal tower of Phase 3b was built over it. Excavations along the northeastern side of the later building did, however, locate the division wall (7378) between the original two rooms, the northern end of which was keyed into the southern face of wall 7290. The east room measured 5.03×4.72 m and is thought to have been accessed from the west room as there is no obvious doorway through wall 7247/7386 from the corridor beyond. However, a doorway was located along the north wall of the room which allowed access to the area beyond. The purpose of these rooms is unclear, although the construction of a contemporary bath-house to the north may suggest the rooms were related to this, perhaps forming changing rooms.

The western bath-house

The bath-house was built along the northwestern side of the house, on the edge of the Vivari Channel (Fig. 4.32). The earlier buildings that had been located within this corner of the site were removed and a thick raft of concrete and stone (2169) was laid to form a firm foundation for



Figure 4.27. Detail of mosaic 7306. A fragment of marble can be seen (top right) attached to the inner face of wall 7302

the new building. The sub-floor of the bath-house was then constructed on top of, or more accurately as part of, the footings, extending as a single contiguous element across the full width of the building. Forming a rough and irregular surface, it contained a mix of angular and sub-rounded limestone pieces, along with occasional brick and tile fragments, bonded with a whitish-pink mortar. Even though only the eastern end of the bath-house has been excavated, this compacted surface was found along the entire northern edge of the initial drainage ditch evaluation, continuing beyond the western limit of it (Fig. 4.33). This would indicate that this building was in excess of 20 m in length.

The walls of the bath-house were built directly onto the sub-floor (Fig. 4.34). Large, cut limestone blocks were used to face the exterior of the walls, with the interior walls defined by tile and brick. Between these was a limestone rubble core bonded with a gravelly orangey-brown mortar. Wall 1112 ran along the southern side of the building; measuring 0.52 m wide, the wall was traced for 12.90 m, the western end having been truncated by the 1960s drainage works. To avoid the northwest corner of the apsidal hall, the eastern end of wall 1112 had been stepped in slightly. The eastern wall of the bath-house (2161) measured 4.42 m externally. Built into this wall was the opening of the *praefurnium*. At the northern end of 2161 the wall turned

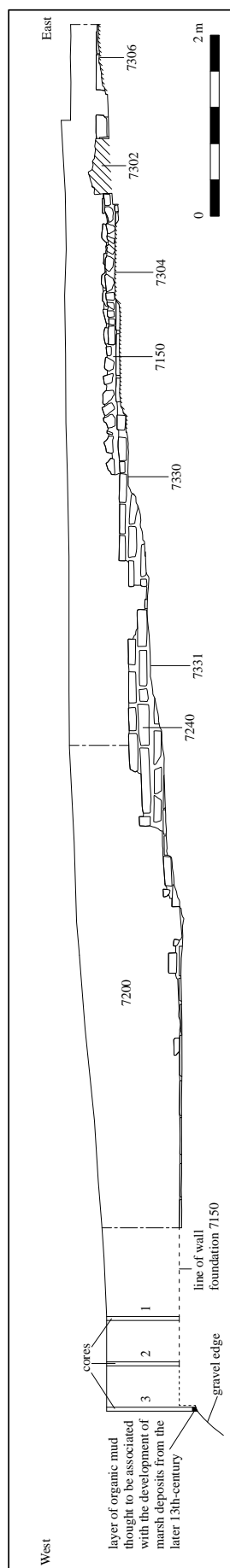


Figure 4.28. Elevation of the north wall of the marine entrance with information from the core samples. For the position of the cores see Fig. 4.2

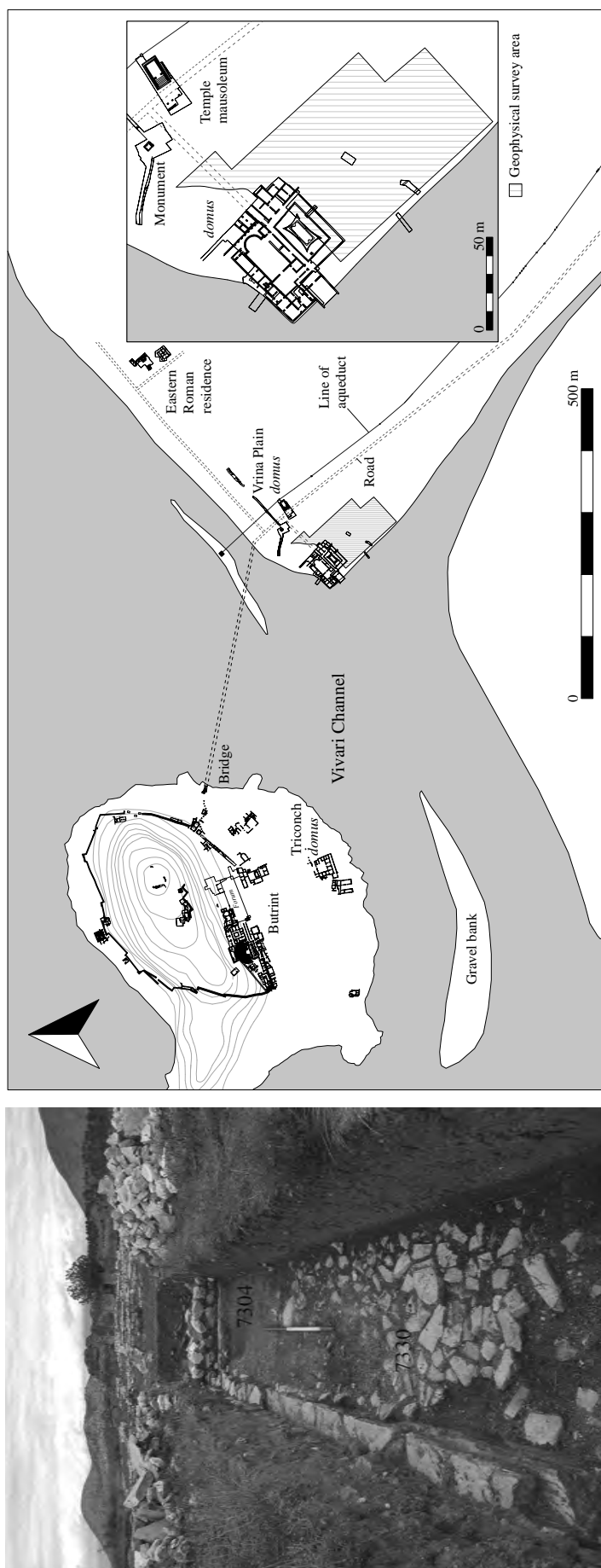


Figure 4.29. The western room of the marine entrance, looking east, showing the cocciopesto floor 7304 and the underlying rubble platform 7330 (1 m scale)

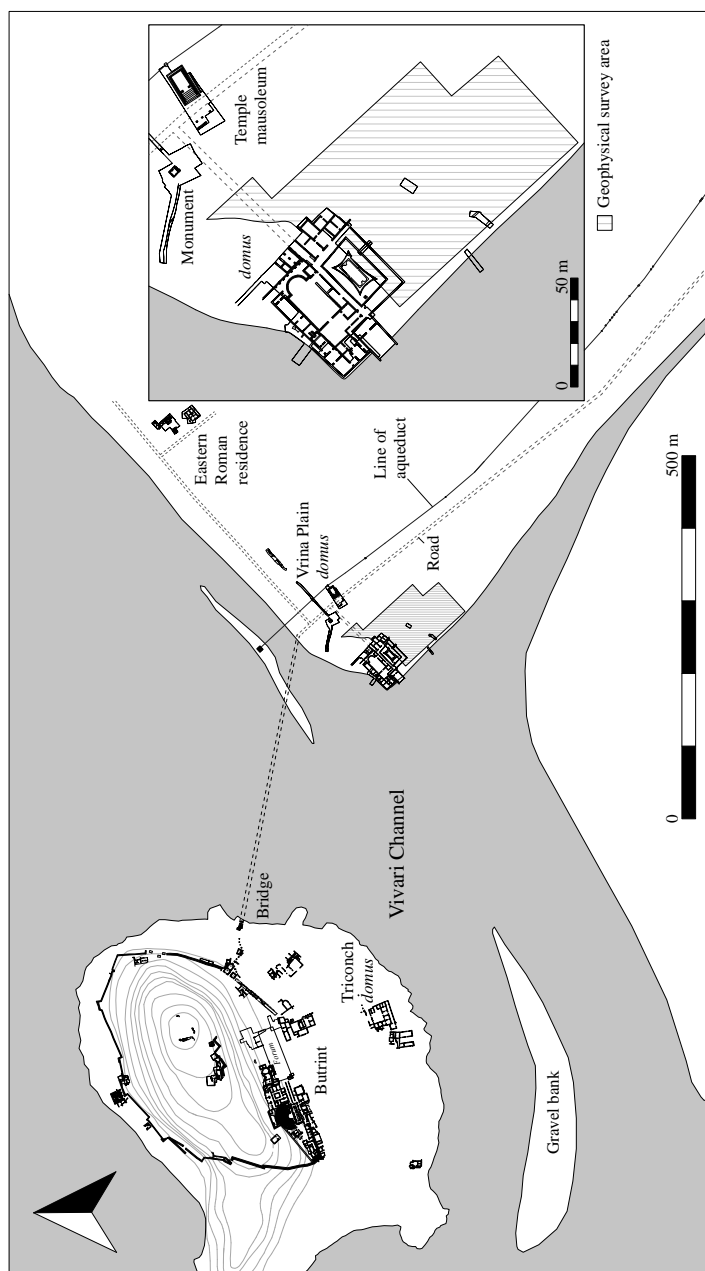


Figure 4.30. Reconstruction of the 3rd-century shoreline

to the west, with wall 2162 forming the northeast corner of the bath-house. Measuring 1 m wide, wall 2162 extended 1.35 m before terminating against wall 2165, a north–south-aligned wall which ran across the internal width of the bath-house. These two walls were keyed together, the core of wall 2162 being incorporated into that of wall 2165; the impressions of the corner facing stones of wall 2165 were visible along the side of the overlapping core. Wall 2165 continued to the north of 2162, indicating that the bath-house turned again to the north at this point. Although the northern end of 2165 had been robbed out, the sub-floor and foundation of the bath-house continued for a further

2.40 m before stopping, demarcating the northern edge of the building.

At the point where walls 2165 and 2162 were keyed together a narrow gap 0.17 m wide was observed within wall 2165. As the southern end of wall 2165 seems to have formed a partition within the building, separating the eastern chamber from the western rooms, this gap is thought to indicate the position of a drain. Incorporated into the foundation of the wall the drain would have taken stale water from the baths and discharged it into the Vivari Channel to the north.

A second drain was located to the west but it had not survived the later subsidence and robbing very well and remained as a depression *c.* 0.15–0.22 m deep throughout most of its 5.80 m course. A distinct orange mortar was found on either side, with worked stones placed on the edge, suggesting that this drain had also been incorporated into the foundation of a wall (2164), thereby demarcating the position of a second north–south partition wall within the bath-house. Unlike 2165, wall 2164 does not appear to have abutted the southern wall of the building, suggesting that an archway may have been located here to allow the hot air to flow into the western rooms.

Adjoining walls 2165 and 2164 at right-angles was a third partition wall (2163) composed of brick and tile courses with a limestone rubble core. Following the alignment of wall 2162 and measuring a similar width, this east–west partition had been keyed into the two north–south division walls 2165 and 2164. This was clearly visible at the eastern end of 2163, where the stones of the drain within wall 2165 were found to overlap the tile foundation of 2163. To the west, the wall continued beyond 2164 indicating that there were further rooms within this substantial complex.

A further drain (1129) may also have been incorporated into the bath-house. This drain, thought to be the northern



Figure 4.31. The north wing, looking north (2 m scale)

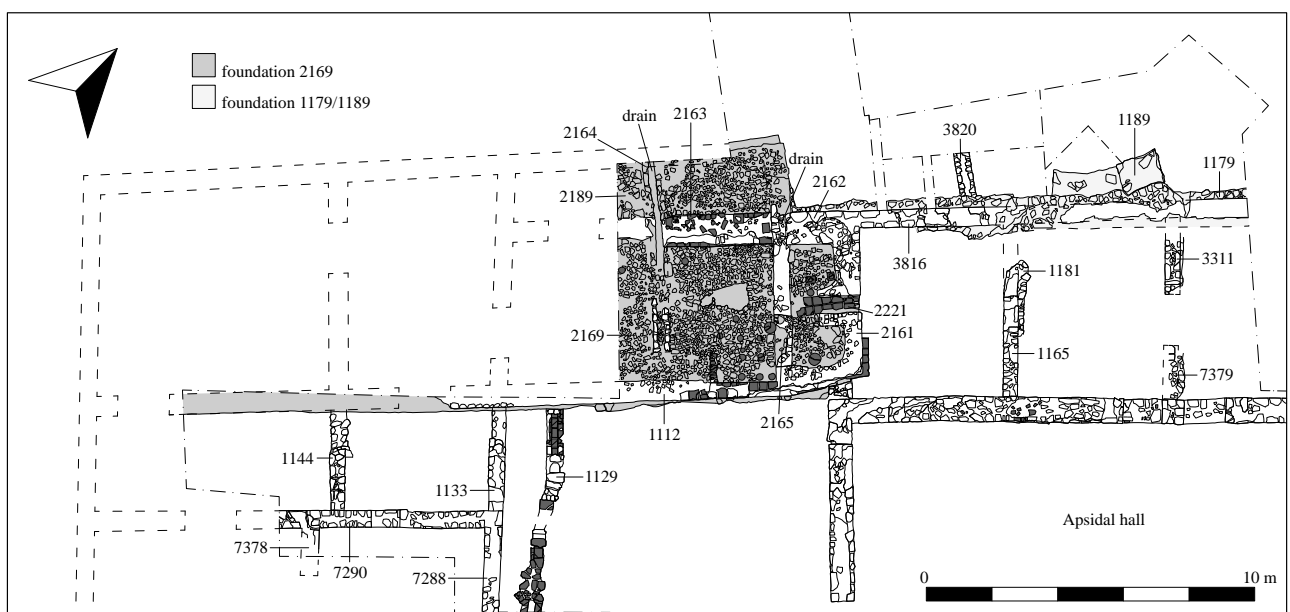


Figure 4.32. Plan of the western bath-house



Figure 4.33. The western bath-house, looking west

continuation of the outlet from the courtyard pools, had been built over by the foundation of the bath-house. Constructed with a slight kink in its alignment and truncating the eastern corner of the demolished Building 7, the walls of 1129 were built out of a mixture of brick and tile standing three courses high, bonded with a yellow mortar containing frequent pebble and shell inclusions. Rectangular tiles formed the base of the drain and limestone slabs were used to cap it. At the point where the drain entered the bath-house, the level of the capping was observed to be just below the sub-floor (Fig. 4.35). Although the area beyond has not been excavated, this connection may suggest that 1129 was incorporated into the sub-floor of the new bath-house to form an outlet for waste water from the overlying chamber.

Overall five rooms associated with this bath-house complex were exposed. Of these, the most easterly was thought to be the location of the buildings hot plunge pool as where the side walls 1112 and 2162 adjoined the



Figure 4.34. Bath-house walls built directly onto sub-floor 2169



Figure 4.35. Drain 1129 running below the sub-floor of the western bath-house



Figure 4.36. The western bath-house, looking east (2 m scale)

eastern wall 2161, the corners curved in, giving the eastern end of the room a semicircular shape (Fig. 4.36). In order to create the curve, these walls were built much wider than the flanking walls. Internally the chamber measured 3.68×1.54 m. The pool was heated by the *praefurnium*, the flue of which was located directly below it. A gap 0.55 m wide built into the eastern wall (2161) formed the opening of the *praefurnium*. Brick and tile were used to create the external surround of the entrance as well as its internal sides. The fire chamber initially seems to have been within the building, the walls of the chamber extending for 1.27 m into the internal space. The base of the flue was floored with a double row of ceramic tiles (2221). Measuring 0.25 m^2 in size, the tiles, which were bonded with a white mortar and laid over the sub-floor, continued beyond the walls of the *praefurnium* as far as the division wall 2165. An arch within this wall would have allowed the hot air to flow through this space to the rooms beyond. The tiles at the eastern end of the flue were heat cracked, indicating the position of the fire.

Beyond the plunge pool, one heated room, measuring 4.21×3.37 m, and part of the eastern end of another, further to the west, were discovered, the two rooms separated by wall 2164. Benches may have been incorporated into wall 2163, lining the north wall of the central room; this would explain the large width of this wall.

Within all three of these eastern rooms a number of circular and rectangular *pilae*, and other tiles, survived on the sub-floor (Fig. 4.37). Where these occurred in stacks, they were generally no more than two or three tiles high, but as many as five were preserved in one particular group within the central heated room (2178) (for a summary of the *pilae* see Table 4.2). No attempt had been made to keep square and round tiles separate, and stacks were found consisting of different types. In places square tiles had been broken for a better fit against the edges of the rooms. The circular tiles had a typical diameter of 0.20 m, while a

few measuring 0.36 m across were also present. This latter group may represent the act of positioning larger tiles on the top of stacks with a smaller diameter in order to spread the weight of the *bipedales* of the suspended floor above. A number of the tiles had marks on them, either hand swipes or incised crosses.

The best-preserved stacks were found in the central room where the remains of four rows aligned north–south survived in the southeast corner of the room (Fig. 4.38). To the west of these was a line of three tiles (2218) placed parallel to the *pilae*. Built abutting and perpendicular to the south wall (1112), these tiles measured 0.84×0.25 m and were again used to support the suspended floor. The numerous different tile types used suggests the majority of them were reclaimed.

Two further rooms of this complex were located on the northern side of wall 2163, presumably ante-chambers leading to the heated rooms. The eastern room measured 3.33×1.74 m, while only the southeast corner of the western room was revealed. These rooms had been largely truncated by later robbing, but in the western room a small portion of flooring was observed (2189). Laid directly over the sub-floor, 2189 comprised a primary layer of dressed and sub-angular limestone blocks with an average size of $0.30 \times 0.25 \times 0.10$ m, over which flat, angular limestone slabs with sub-rounded edges and straight sides, measuring $0.40 \times 0.20 \times 0.05$ m, were placed, set within a pinkish-white pebbly mortar. Brick fragments had been used to fill gaps between the slabs.

Along the southern side of wall 1112 there appear to have been two further rooms, formed by walls 1133 and 1144 (see Fig. 4.32). These walls were built over a compact silty levelling layer (1066) which sealed the robbed walls of the earlier Building 7. Both walls were built over foundations found to be at the same level as that of the bath-house but unfortunately the connection between them had been completely removed by the cutting



Figure 4.37. Plan of the surviving pilae stacks

of the drainage ditch, making it uncertain as to whether the foundations and walls were keyed into each other (Fig. 4.39). However, the mortar used in both foundations does match, suggesting they are contemporary. To the south the walls abutted wall 7290, with the line of wall 1133 carrying on the alignment of wall 7288. Assuming both walls were built as part of the bath-house this would indicate that the corridor and associated rooms around the western marine entrance were completed just prior to the bath-house.

As well as defining the northwest corner of the *domus*,

the bath-house also seems to have demarcated the northern limit of the house, as shown by wall 3816, which extended to the east from the northeastern corner of the bath-house (see Fig. 4.32). Running parallel to the apsidal hall, wall 3816 measured 0.58 m wide and had been built along the side of the Vivari Channel; the northern side of the wall continued the line of wall 2162, creating an unbroken face to the complex when viewed from the north. Prior to the construction of 3816, the earlier, angled wall 3819 of Building 8 had been dismantled and the area to the north of it levelled over with a mid-greyish-green silty

Table 4.2 Location and description of the pilae stacks from the three heated rooms of the bath-house

Location	Context	Description
Plunge pool		Four <i>pilae</i> along southern side and one along northern side of the room
	2215	single hand-swiped square tile with single fragmentary circular tile on top, north side
	2216	single square tile with single fragmentary circular tile on top, north side
	2217	half of a single square tile, probably broken to fit in northeast corner of room, north side
	2188	single hand-swiped circular tile, north side
	2187	single large (0.36 m diameter) circular tile with scored x-shape, south side
Central room		Four rows of <i>pilae</i> and tile line, southeast corner of the room and one tile northeast corner
Row 1	2173	single circular tile in southeast corner
	2172	three large (0.36 m diameter) hand-swiped circular tiles stacked adjacent to drain
Row 2	2178	five circular tiles stacked adjacent to south wall (2161)
	2177	three circular tiles stacked
	2176	three small (0.15 m diameter) circular tiles stacked
	2175	four circular tiles stacked
	2174	three circular tiles stacked
Row 3	2183	two circular tiles stacked adjacent to south wall (2161)
	2182	part of single circular tile
	2181	two small (0.15 m diameter) circular tiles stacked
	2180	single circular tile
	2170	two circular tiles stacked
Row 4	2184	single circular tile
	2186	single circular tile (0.22 m diameter) in the northwest corner of the room
Western room	2185	single circular tile (0.22 m diameter), very similar to 2186, possibly not <i>in situ</i>



Figure 4.38. Pilae stacks in the southeast corner of the central room of the western bath-house (2 m scale)

clay (3818/3851). Pottery recovered from layer 3851 was dated to the early/mid-3rd century AD. Over this a rubble foundation (1179) was laid to form a solid base on which to construct wall 3816. To the west, 1179 was found to underlie wall 2162, indicating that 1179 was a continuation of the rubble core 2169 over which the bath-house had been built. Much of the eastern end of wall 3816 had been damaged, partially as a result of robbing and partially due to being cut by the 1960s drainage ditch. Despite this, the foundation (1179) was visible throughout



Figure 4.39. Walls 1133 and 1144 during excavation. The connection between these walls and the western bath-house was removed by the cutting of the 1960s drainage ditch

the excavated area, extending for some c. 11.90 m, with patches of the distinct orange mortar used in the bonding of the overlying wall 3816 being found along the entire

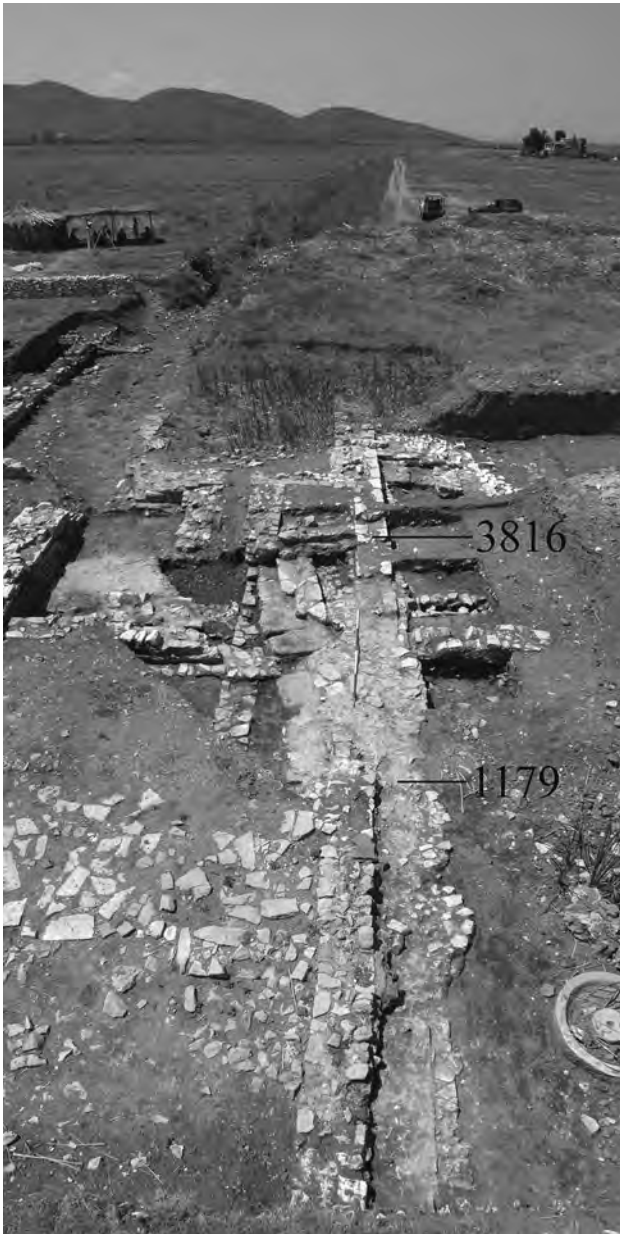


Figure 4.40. Wall 3816 and foundation 1179, looking west (2 m scale)

length of it (Fig. 4.40). Towards the western end of 1179 a drain (3820) had been incorporated into the foundation.

The full extent of wall 3816 is unclear as the area overlying the eastern end of the wall has not been excavated. However, it is possible that it may have extended as far as the line of the earlier road wall 7029, as a secondary build using a similar mortar to that of 3816 can be seen at the southern end of 7029. Fragments of wall plaster covering both builds were found on the inner face of wall 7029. A second wall (7028), built with a similar mortar to 3816 and seen just to the west of 7029, may also be contemporary with these builds.

In relation to foundation 1179 it should be noted that the section of foundation to the east (1189) appeared to

project out slightly from the northern edge of 1179 (see Fig. 4.32). This section (1189) had fallen away over time from 1179. Despite the minor difference in construction between 1189 and 1179, in that larger squared limestone blocks had been used in 1189, the edges of the break between the two matched, indicating that these structures had originally been all one build, with 1189 possibly forming an outer supporting buttress to wall 1179.

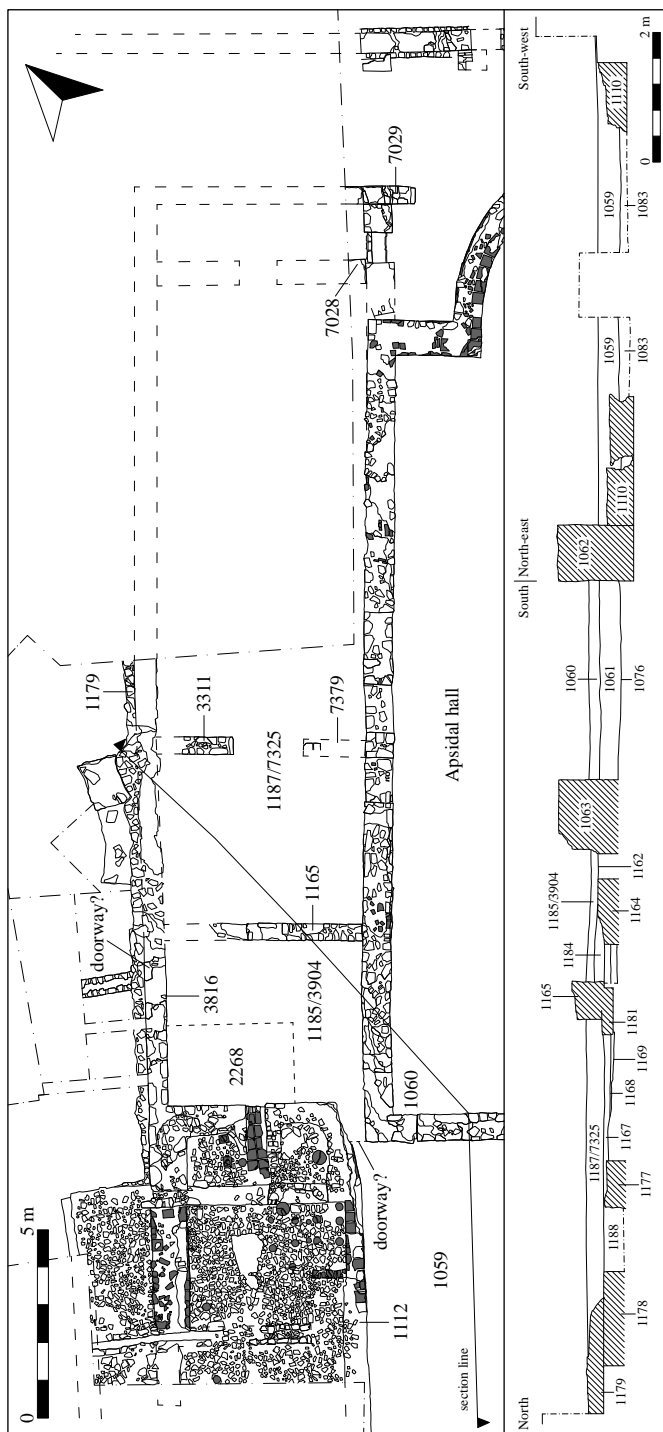
The space to the south of wall 3816 appears to have been divided up into a series of rooms. Although only partially excavated, three rooms of this northern range have so far been exposed (Fig. 4.41). The western room was defined by the eastern end of the bath-house and a north-south-aligned wall (1165) that extended out from the northern wall of the apsidal hall. Measuring 5.20×4.35 m, this room enclosed the area around the *praefurnium* and allowed access to control and tend the fire. Access to this space was either from the southwest corner by the gap between wall 1112 and the corner of the apsidal hall or from a door possibly located in wall 3816, along the northern side of the room. Prior to the construction of the room, the earlier wall 1164 was demolished and replaced by a new wall (1165) built on a wide foundation (1181) that was cut through the earlier make-up layers 1168 and 1167. Once wall 1165 was built, the room was levelled over with a light-grey silty clay (1183/1184), which also sealed wall 1164. A further layer (1185/2268/3904) was then spread across the room to form the new floor. Along the northern side of the room this layer (1185/2268/3904) covered 1179, the foundation of wall 3816.

The central room of this northern range measured 5.23×4.52 m internally, while the eastern room was only partially exposed (c. 5.48×1.23 m). These two rooms were separated by wall 3311/7379 although a central doorway, 1.55 m wide, allowed access between them. Following the construction of the walls a mid-greyish-brown silty clay (1187/7325) was spread between the rooms in order to create a level foundation for the floor.

Although dating from these various levelling deposits was limited, layer 1183 did contain a grooved-rim cooking pot spot-dated to the late 2nd/mid-3rd century AD

In time the heating of the various rooms of the bath-house appears to have become an issue as soon after its construction the *praefurnium* was altered; two side walls were built either side of its eastern end to help increase the air flow to it (Fig. 4.42a). The southern wall (2166) measured $1.80 \times 0.68 \times 0.48$ m. It had a roughly finished appearance and consisted of a limestone rubble core bonded with white mortar covered by tiles of which four courses were visible. To the east it had been truncated by the machining of the 1960s drainage ditch. The opposing wall (2167) measured $2.10 \times 0.68 \times 0.48$ m and had been built in an almost identical construction technique. Along its internal edge six tile courses could be discerned. Assuming the space between the walls had been covered by an arch, now lost, this would have meant that air could be funnelled directly to the fire, thereby increasing the through-draught

Figure 4.41. Plan of the rooms along the northern side of the apsidal hall



and providing an efficient flow of hot air into the space beneath the heated chambers.

However, even this does not seem to have resolved the issue completely and in a subsequent phase the flue was altered once more (Fig. 4.42b). The southern side of the external flue, along with the internal chamber, was narrowed. This lining (7380) was built from a mix of limestone, tile and brick pieces, with the eastern end overlying 2268, through which the side walls of the flue had been cut, and the western end overlying the tile floor 2221 of the firing chamber. Within this narrowed space a new floor (2168), consisting of a layer of small limestone, tile and brick fragments set within a coarse white mortar, covered by a layer of tile varying in size from 0.05 m² to 0.29 m², was laid over 2268. The larger tiles were placed along the northern edge, with the smaller pieces along the southern side. This new floor would seem to suggest that the firing chamber was now placed at this end of the flue. By having the fire closer to the end of the flue and thereby closer to the draught, along with narrowing the width of the chamber, the hope must have been that this would allow heat from the fire to be transferred directly into the hypocaust, with a more even distribution and less dissipation.

At the eastern end of the north wall of the *praeurnium* (2167) a short wall was built (7046), the northern edge of which abutted the inner face of wall 3816. Wood may have been stored in this space to dry before being burnt.

In time floor 2168 was sealed by a mid-grey silt containing small, sub-angular stones and small tile fragments (2135). This deposit extended eastwards beyond the destroyed end of the *praeurnium* walls to a point where it too had been machined away by ditch digging. Mixed in with the deposit was a copper alloy handle of what seems to have been a scalpel (SF 2876) (see Volume 6.2, Fig. 6.23), implying that along with bathing some form of surgery may have taken place within the building.

The apsidal hall

The primary public space within the *domus* seems to have been a large apsidal hall structure (Fig. 4.43). Measuring 25.30 × 13.50 m, the hall was orientated east–west and was formed by the addition of an apse (3068/143), 9 m wide and 5.33 m in depth, onto the eastern end of Building 8 of the Phase 2 settlement (Fig. 4.44). In order to accommodate the new build, the eastern end of the northern wall of Building 8 (3136) was rebuilt, while the western end of wall 3990/7030/7031 was cut away. The floor level of Building 8 was also raised at this time. Part of this levelling episode was revealed in the northwest corner of the hall where a thick light greyish-brown silty clay levelling (1061) was deposited over the earlier floor

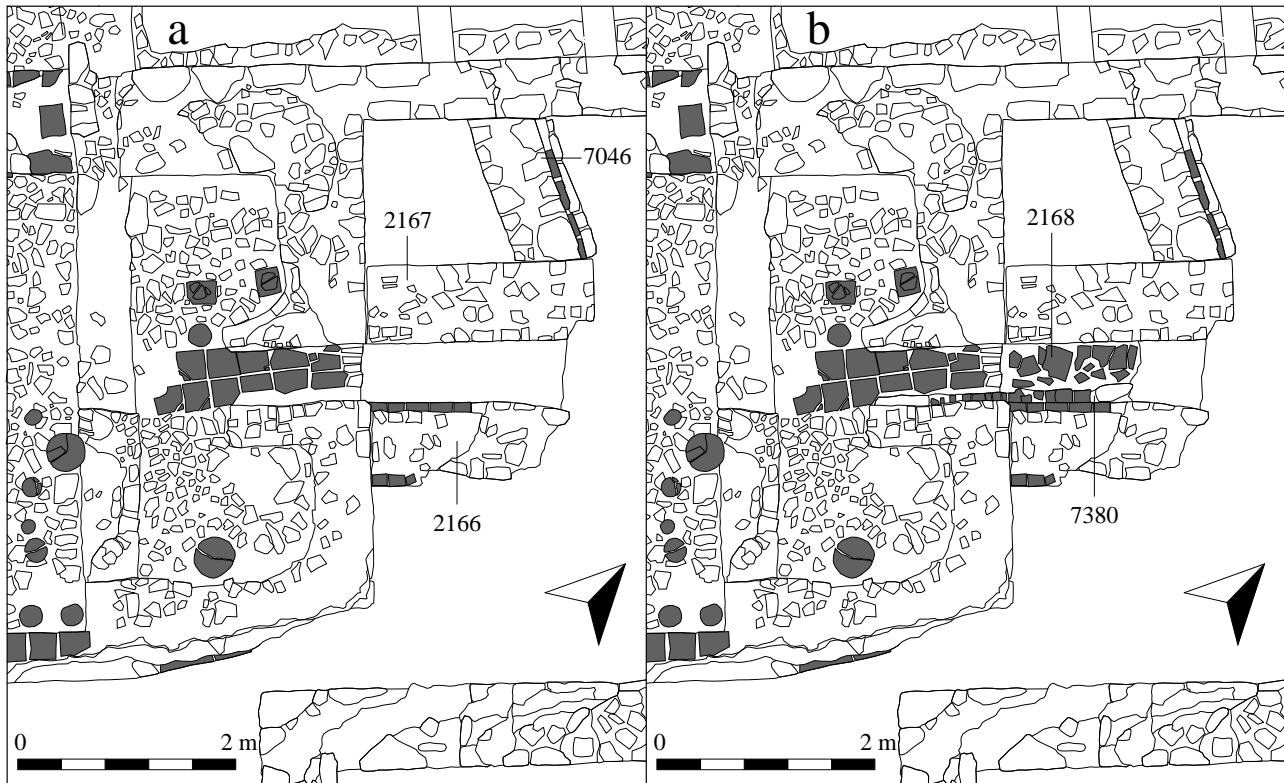


Figure 4.42. Plan of the changes made to the praefurnium of the western bath-house



Figure 4.43. Aerial view of the Phase 3a apsidal hall complex

(1076). This in turn was sealed by a dark greyish-black silty clay (1060) which is thought to be a foundation layer for the overlying floor, now lost (see Fig. 4.41). Ceramics from 1060 date from the mid-3rd century.

The interior walls of the apse had been constructed with tiles, some of which bore characteristic finger-swipe marks.¹⁶ Measuring 30 mm thick and varying between

0.27 m² and 0.31 m² in size, the tiles were well laid and bonded with a whitish mortar containing a large amount of very small gravel and shell inclusions, with the height between the courses varying from 40 mm to 60 mm. The wall had been built in vertical lifts with two levels of six put-log holes measuring 0.12 × 0.12 m visible along the inner edge of the extant part of the apse (Fig. 4.45). On the exterior the build was slightly different, utilising a combination of three courses of tile followed by three courses of stone. The height of the tile course was 0.23 m while the stone was 0.44 m. The tiles matched those used in the interior while the stones were a mix of angular and sub-angular limestone blocks varying in size from 0.08 × 0.10 × 0.10 m to 0.20 × 0.14 × 0.10 m. The arms of the apse were also constructed in tile masonry. The apse was built partially over the line of the earlier north–south road that had led to the Vivari Channel but which by this time was no longer a thoroughfare as the southern end of the road had been blocked by wall 7035.¹⁷

Covering the floor of the apse was a compact mortar surface (137) (see Fig. 7.14). Although only partially revealed in a small sondage excavated against the northern side of the structure, this floor is thought to have been the foundation layer for a more decorative surface in either marble or mosaic that was subsequently removed after the building's abandonment.

It is unclear how the interior of the apse was decorated as there was no trace of any wall plaster or any signs of fixing holes to suggest that the walls had been covered in

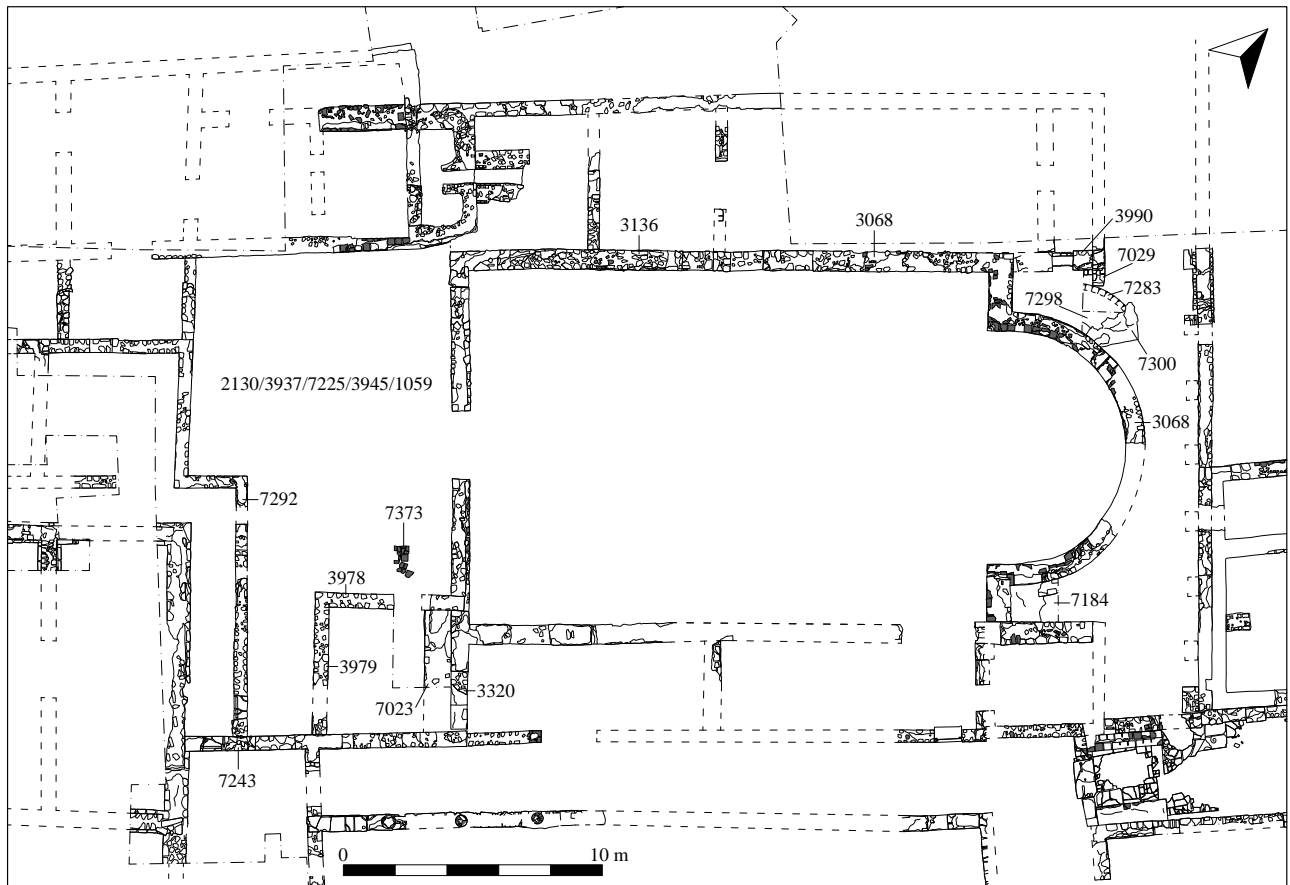


Figure 4.44. The apsidal hall and western courtyard



Figure 4.45. Detail of the southern apse (1 m scale)

marble veneers so it may be that other forms of decoration such as textiles were used to adorn the walls. The hall's internal arrangement is also unclear as due to its reuse in subsequent phases, no contemporary horizons relating to its original use were identified. Despite this, the building's substantial construction, along with its location by the principal northern entrances, would seem to suggest it



Figure 4.46. Oven 7283 visible beneath the apse of the apsidal hall (1 m scale)

formed a major public reception room within the new *domus*. Reflecting the changing fashions of elite housing at this time, it is possible that the building can be identified as an audience chamber where the owner, seated in the apse, would have received his clients as well as his business associates.¹⁸ The majority of these grand formal rooms are normally thought to date to the late 3rd century, becoming the major architectural feature of large private residences of the 4th and 5th centuries across the Empire. The early date of the Vrina apsidal structure is based on the ceramics and coins associated with the construction of the apse.

To the north, the apse was found to have been built over a large, circular clay-lined feature (7283), possibly an oven, constructed following the dismantling of the central part of the western road wall 7029 (Fig. 4.46). Located at the northern end of this gap 7283 was 0.26 m deep and had been cut through the surface of the earlier road (7129) that had led to the Vivari Channel and the underlying light greyish-green silty-clay make-up layer (7297). The edge of 7283 was lined with clay, which at the base was bright red in colour indicating that intense heat had been generated within the feature. Only a small part of 7283 was excavated (1.06 m north–south by c. 1.70 m east–west) as the majority of the southern side of the cut had been built over by the apse, while the western side was sealed under later levelling deposits. However, based on the arc of the cut uncovered, 7283 would potentially have been c. 5.50 m in diameter (Fig. 4.47). Infilling 7283 was a very black ashy deposit (7284). Frequent fragments of carbonised wood were found throughout this deposit, presumably residue from the last firing; Carbon 14 dating of this charcoal has produced a calibrated age of AD 130–225 (1834 ± 37 BP) for this episode.¹⁹ Unfortunately no obvious waste products were found in or around the area excavated to indicate what 7283 may have produced, but as it was built over the road leading to the Vivari Channel and thereby post-dates the western suburb, it seems likely that it was associated with the construction of the *domus*. Assuming it was an oven, it may have been a large bread oven which would have been necessary to feed the many workers who would have been involved in the construction of the new, expansive *domus*.

Following the final firing of the oven, a thin layer of light-grey silty clay (7298) accumulated over the ash layer. With the apse built, this was then sealed by a rough greyish-white mortar (7300) that was spread over the northeastern area of the oven to cap it, as this part of the oven remained visible outside the north wall of the apse. To support the mortar, limestone rubble had been dumped into the depression of the oven. The mortar also sealed the offset of the apse along this side. Both the oven and foundation of the apse were subsequently sealed by levelling deposit 7092, dated to the mid-4th century AD (Fig. 4.48).

These dates are corroborated by the results from the excavations to the south of the apse, where a thin layer of light-brown silty clay (7184) was identified overlying the foundation of the apse (Fig. 4.49). Ceramics recovered from 7184 date to the 1st to 3rd century AD. Sealing 7184 was

7183, a thick levelling deposit which has produced pottery dating to c. AD 350–70. The similarities in dating from both these excavations provide a *terminus ante quem* for the construction of the apse and would seem to imply that the apse was built as part of the initial construction of the new *domus*.

The hall was entered from the west through the doorway of the earlier Building 8 (Fig. 4.50). To reach this entrance from the peristyle, guests would have first entered the room at the western end of the north portico and used the eastern doorway within wall 7243. Beyond the door was a small corridor, delineated by walls 7292 and 3979. Measuring 5.50 × 2.50 m this corridor led into an open courtyard directly in front of the main western door of the apsidal hall; the northern limit of this area was defined by the western bath-house. For those guests arriving by the eastern entrance, this route would have taken them along the entire length of the north portico, in the process allowing them a view across the pool and the private area of the house beyond. This glimpse into the owner's private space was deliberate and would have heightened the visitor's impression of the owner's bearing in society even before they were admitted to an audience with him. The opulence of the marine entrance would have instilled a similar reaction in those using the western entrance; these guests would have viewed the eastern and western wings of the house en route to the hall.

Prior to the construction of the open courtyard, the earlier tower like structure associated with Building 8 was removed, as indicated by robber cuts 1084/2157 and 7254. Walls 7347 and 7345, along with Building 7, were also demolished at this time. Following this, the area of the new courtyard was levelled over with a thick layer of mid-greyish-black silty clay (1059/2130/3937/7225/3945), which also sealed the southern edge of the western bath-house's foundation (Fig. 4.51).²⁰ Ceramics recovered from 1059/2130/3937/7225/3945 are spot-dated to the late 2nd and early 3rd century, with 1059, 7225 and 3945 also containing pieces dated to between the early and mid-3rd century.²¹ This dating is corroborated by ceramics found within the backfill of the robber cuts 1084/2157 and 7254. Sealed below the levelling, these fills (1083/2156 and 7255) also contained ceramics dating from the 2nd and mid-3rd centuries.

As well as ceramics, layer 3945 was also notable for a large dump of glass cakes (or ingots) in green, blue, yellow and purple (SF 6264) mixed within it. For a discussion on the implications of these cakes and the possible use of them see Volume 6.2, Chapter 8.

The new courtyard seems to have been paved originally with tile (7373), some of which survived along the southern edge of the area overlying deposit 3945 (see Fig. 4.51). Although no tiles were found in the space surrounding the main doorway into the apsidal hall, patches of a greyish-white mortar (2121), thought to have formed the bedding for the overlying surface, were noted. Beneath 2121 was a brown silty clay (2122), which

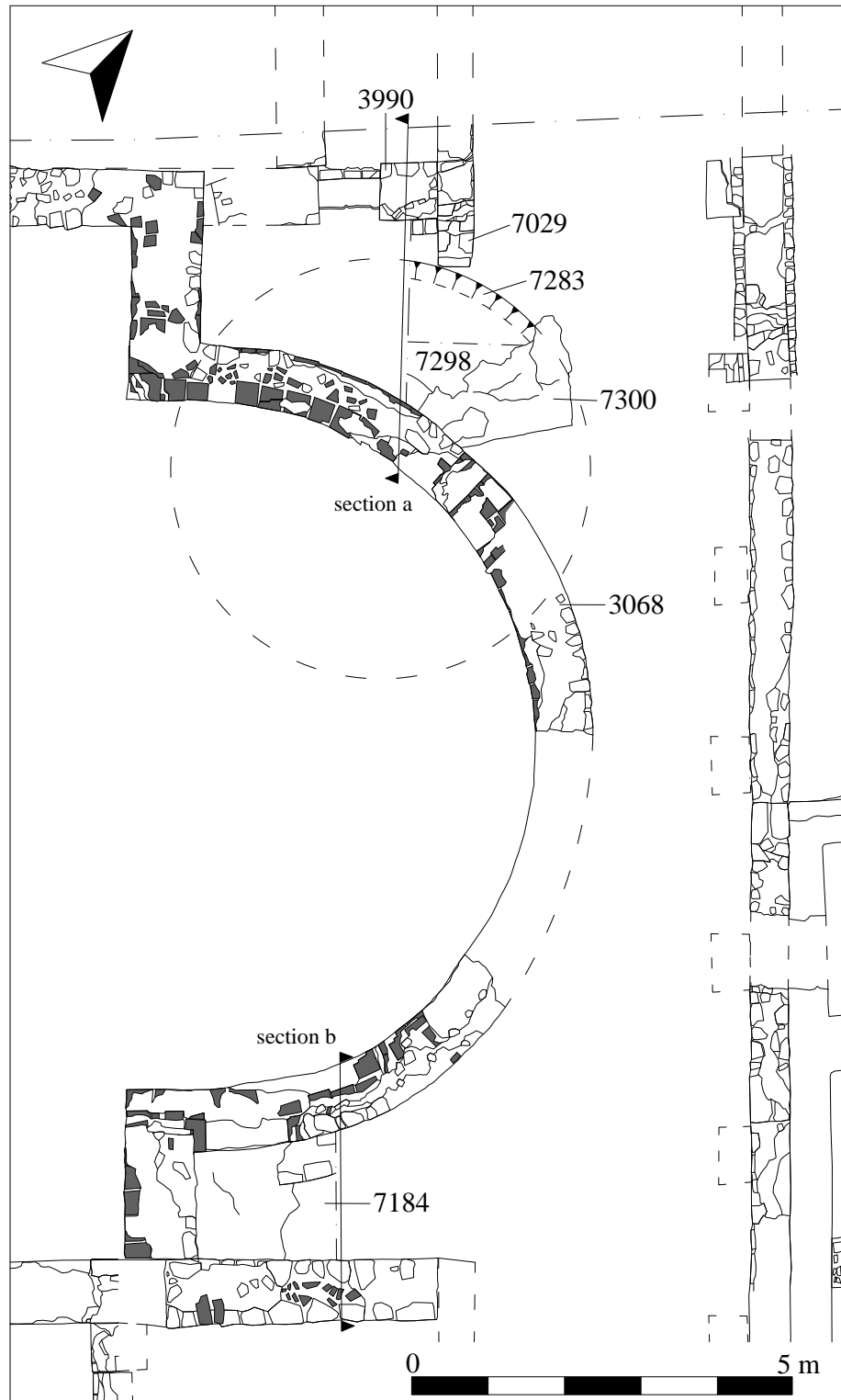


Figure 4.47. Plan showing possible circumference of oven 7283 below the apse of the Phase 3a apsidal hall and the deposits infilling it

formed a foundation layer to the overlying mortar. This had been spread over the levelling deposit 2130 (Fig. 4.52). Ceramics recovered from 2122 date from the early to mid-3rd century. Ceramic joins between deposits 2130 and 2122 suggest these layers were spread almost

simultaneously. Layer 2122 also contained further pieces of glass cakes mixed within it.

As part of these changes the small room defined by walls 3978 and 3979 appears to have been altered (Fig. 4.53). The eastern doorway of the room was blocked-in by wall

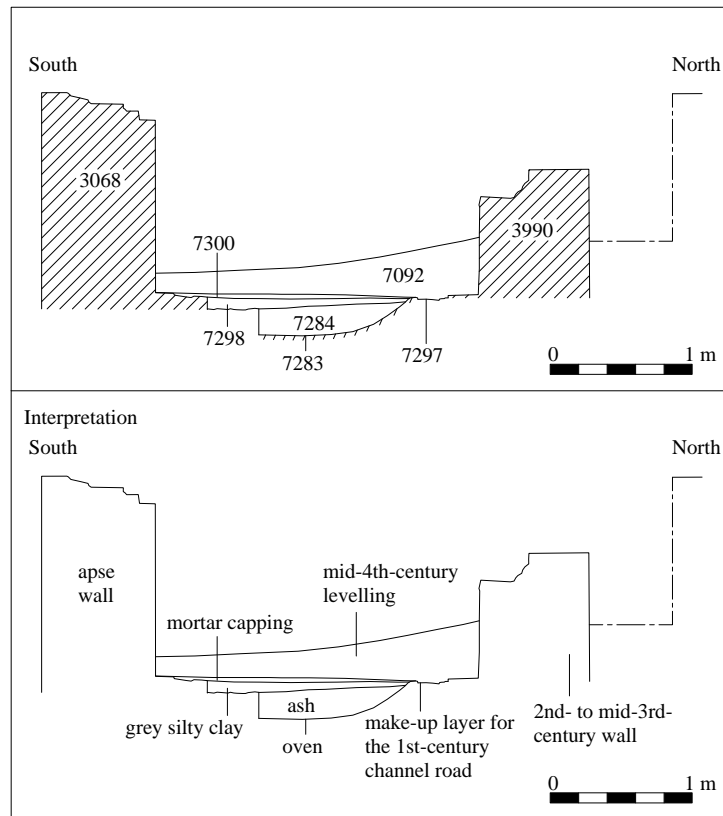


Figure 4.48. East-facing section of deposits infilling and sealing oven 7283 following the construction of the Phase 3a apse. See Fig. 4.47 for location, section line a

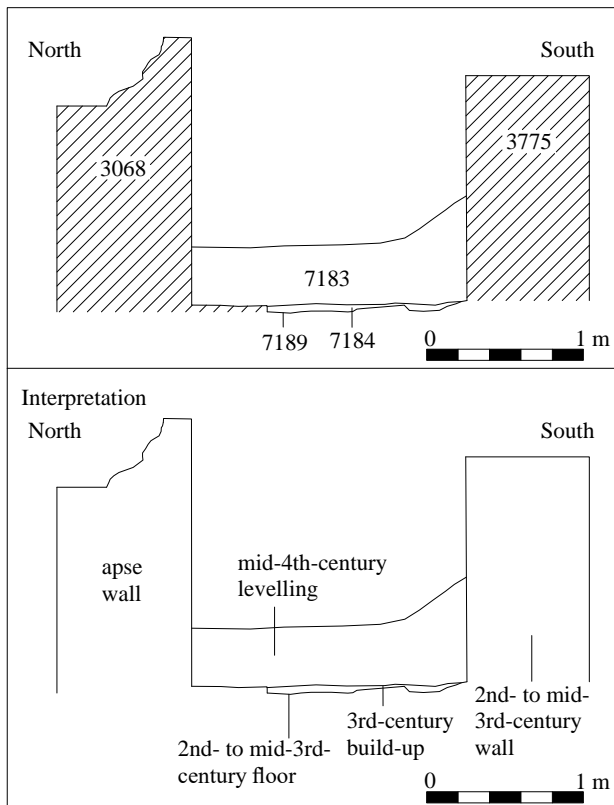


Figure 4.49. West-facing section of the primary deposits covering the southern foundation of the Phase 3a apse. See Fig. 4.47 for location, section line b

3320 and replaced by a new door (1.40 m wide) that was deliberately smashed through wall 3978, the base of which matched the level of the courtyard to the north of it. Within the room a low wall (7023) was built along the eastern side of the room, abutting the southern face of wall 3978 and partially covering the lower part of the blocking wall 3320 (Fig. 4.54). Built directly on top of the earlier occupation debris 7105, wall 7023 was 0.36 m in height and was constructed out of rough limestone blocks up to 0.59 m in size and fragments of tile up to 0.23 m in size. The wall was coursed along its western face, with a rubble core infill.

Although only a very small area of this room was excavated, part of a floor (7099), made up of a number of fragments of tiles varying in size from between 0.16 m to 0.28 m and set within a mottled grey/yellow/brownish-orange sandy silt and crushed mortar matrix, was found just west of wall 7023. The floor had been badly damaged in antiquity such that only an area measuring 0.76×0.62 m survived up against the southern edge of wall 3978. Beneath the floor was a dark-grey sandy-silt deposit (7120). Covering a slightly larger area than the overlying surface ($c. 0.86 \times 0.66$ m), 7120 was 80 mm thick and seems to have been the bedding layer for the floor. Mixed in with the deposit were small pieces of tile, limestone and mortar as well as pottery, bone and shell. The pottery recovered from this deposit dated from the late 2nd to the mid-3rd century.

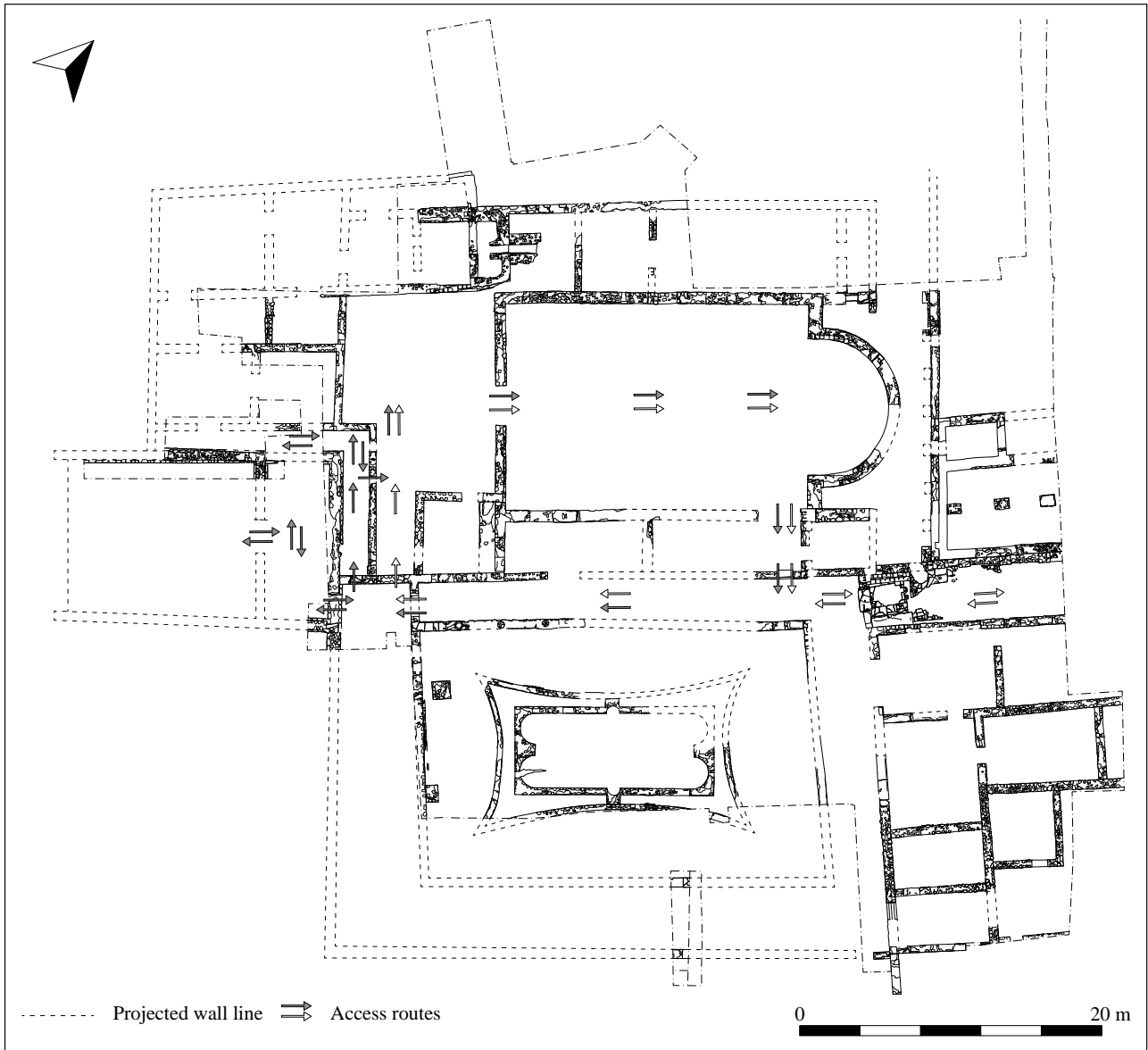


Figure 4.50. The access routes to the apsidal hall

The level of 7099 appears to have been just below the level of the surface of the external courtyard, suggesting that those using this room would have stepped down into it. While there is no direct physical relationship between the floor and wall 7023 they are thought to be contemporary. If so, combined with its location by the western door of the apsidal hall, it would seem that this was an ante-chamber where guests could wait before being allowed into the hall, with 7023 possibly forming the foundation for a bench upon which guests might sit.

A further doorway appears to have been located at the eastern end of the apsidal hall, as a gap 2.80 m wide was found just west of the southern arm of the apse, cut through wall 3067. This doorway provided access to a set of rooms that ran parallel to the southern side of the hall, fronting onto the north portico (Fig. 4.55). To take

account of the new levels of the *domus*, a thick mixed greenish-grey sandy gravelly silt (7167/7190/3971/3997) was used to raise this area, with the levelling covering the base of the doorway as well as the earlier mortar floor (7192) of Building 8. Measuring up to 0.40 m thick, this deposit had been laid following the construction of the apse, the southern side wall of which had been built on top of the earlier floor (7192). Along the southern side of wall 3067 the levelling was slightly deeper, with deposit 7191, a mid- to dark-brownish-grey gritty silt, being spread across this area, covering the mortar floor (7193) associated with the corridor that had run along the southern side of the earlier Building 8 (Fig. 4.56). Ceramics recovered from these levelling deposits date respectively from the mid-3rd to early 4th century and AD 230/240–320.

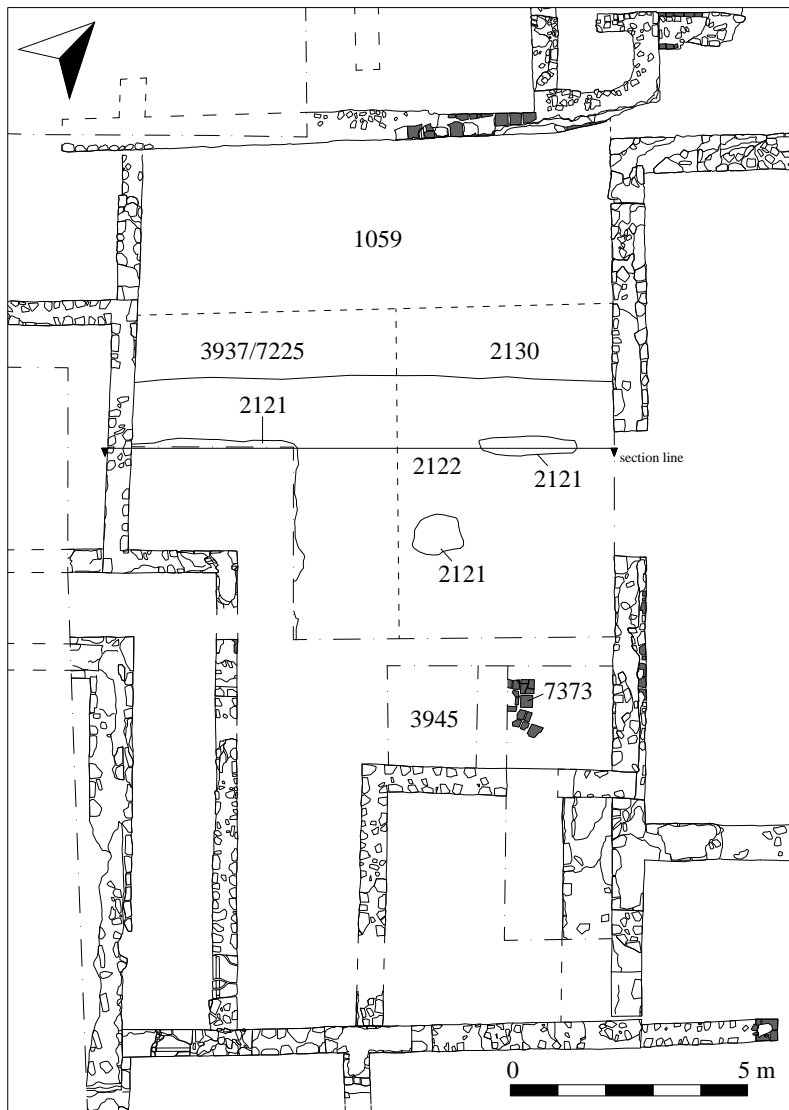


Figure 4.51. The western courtyard fronting the apsidal hall, showing the Phase 3a levelling layers and floor surfaces

Despite much of this southern area having been truncated by the construction of the Phase 7 basilica, at least two rooms were identified along the southern side of the apsidal hall. The division wall between these rooms (3247) was located along the western side of a later Phase 11 burial (3245) (see Fig. 7.24). The eastern room measured 9.80×3.30 m. Along the southern side of the room a creamy-white mortar surface (7349) was found, sealing the levelling layer 7167 (see Figs. 4.55 and 4.56). Laid over a tile foundation (7381), part of which could be seen in the southeast corner of the room, 7349 partially covered the base of a threshold stone (7350) that had been built into the southern wall of the room (7393/3318). Measuring $1.10 \times 0.58 \times 0.16$ m, the door sill and pivot holes were found cut along the southern edge of 7350, indicating that the door would have opened into the room.

The western room measured 9.20×3.50 m. Only the western corner of this room was excavated, as the eastern part of the room had been built over by the Phase 7 basilica. Originally the floor of the room had been covered with an intricate mosaic (3898) (Fig. 4.57), but this was badly damaged

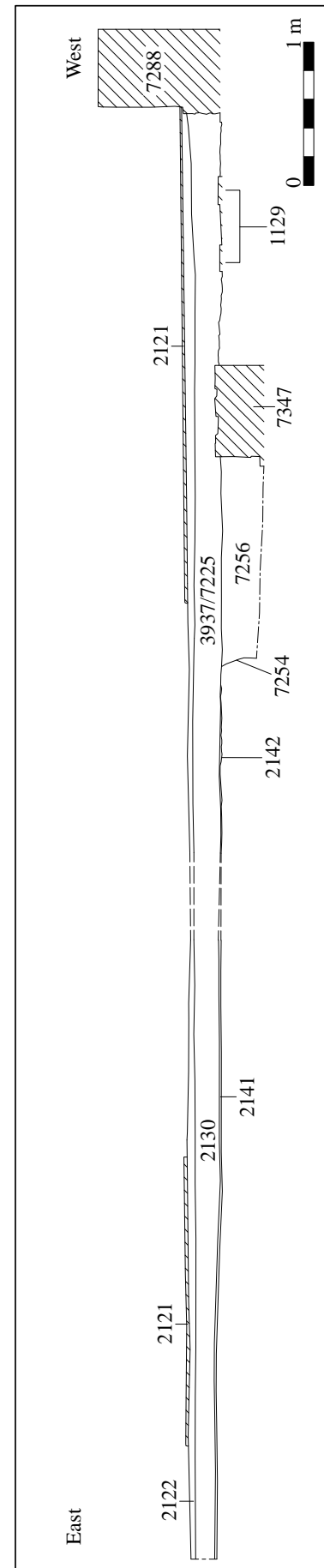


Figure 4.52. North-facing section of the courtyard fronting the western door of the apsidal hall. See Fig. 4.51 for location

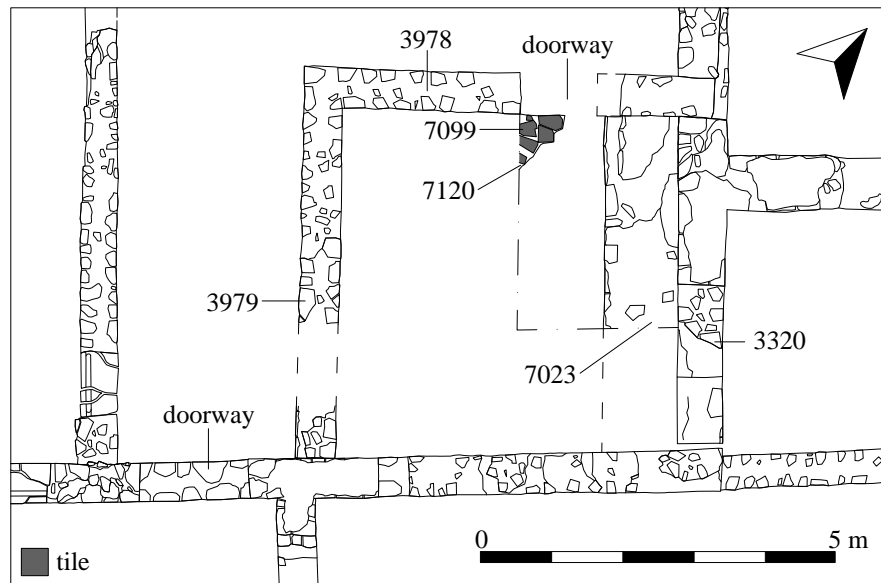


Figure 4.53. The Phase 3a alterations made to the Phase 2 room defined by walls 3978 and 3979



Figure 4.54. The Phase 3a features in the room defined by walls 3978 and 3979. The doorway in wall 3978 was blocked in Phase 7 (1 m scale)

and only small traces of it survived around the edges of the room (Fig. 4.58). The *tesserae* of the mosaic were laid on a bedding of whitish-pink mortar (3899) set over a thicker layer of pinkish-grey mortar (3900). The mortar 3900 had been laid following the blocking of the earlier western door of this room between walls 3977 and 3321, as it was found to abut the blocking wall 3320. Beneath

3900 was a dark-grey silt foundation deposit (7382). This had been laid over a thick, dark-green clay levelling deposit (7340). Prior to the levelling of the room the surrounding walls had been covered in wall plaster. A door within wall 3318, the western surround of which seems to have been edged in tile (3317), allowed access to this room from the north portico.

One further room was located along this side of the complex. Accessed from the eastern room, this space had formerly been the entrance vestibule of Building 8 but this changed following the construction of wall 3776 that blocked in the doorway. Maintained as part of the new *domus*, the room was levelled over (3913) and a white mortar layer (3911) (20 mm thick) was spread across it (see Fig. 4.55). Despite having been badly damaged, pieces of *tesserae* were found pressed into 3911, and in places the impressions of dislodged *tesserae* could also be seen, indicating that this mortar had formed the foundation of a mosaic pavement.²² Prior to the laying of the floor the door in the western side of the room was narrowed by the addition of a blocking wall (7383) on its north side, making the door only 1 m wide.

To the west, the mortar surface 3911 appeared to continue through the narrowed doorway into the room beyond. As already discussed, a mortar surface was found within this room (7349) and although a later blocking of the doorway had truncated the connection between the two rooms (see Chapter 7), it seems likely from the relative heights taken on 7349 and 3911 that these are the same deposit.

The east wing

Rather than requiring the construction of a new building, the east wing of the *domus* utilised the shell of Building 4 (Fig. 4.59). Accessed from the east portico, the rooms

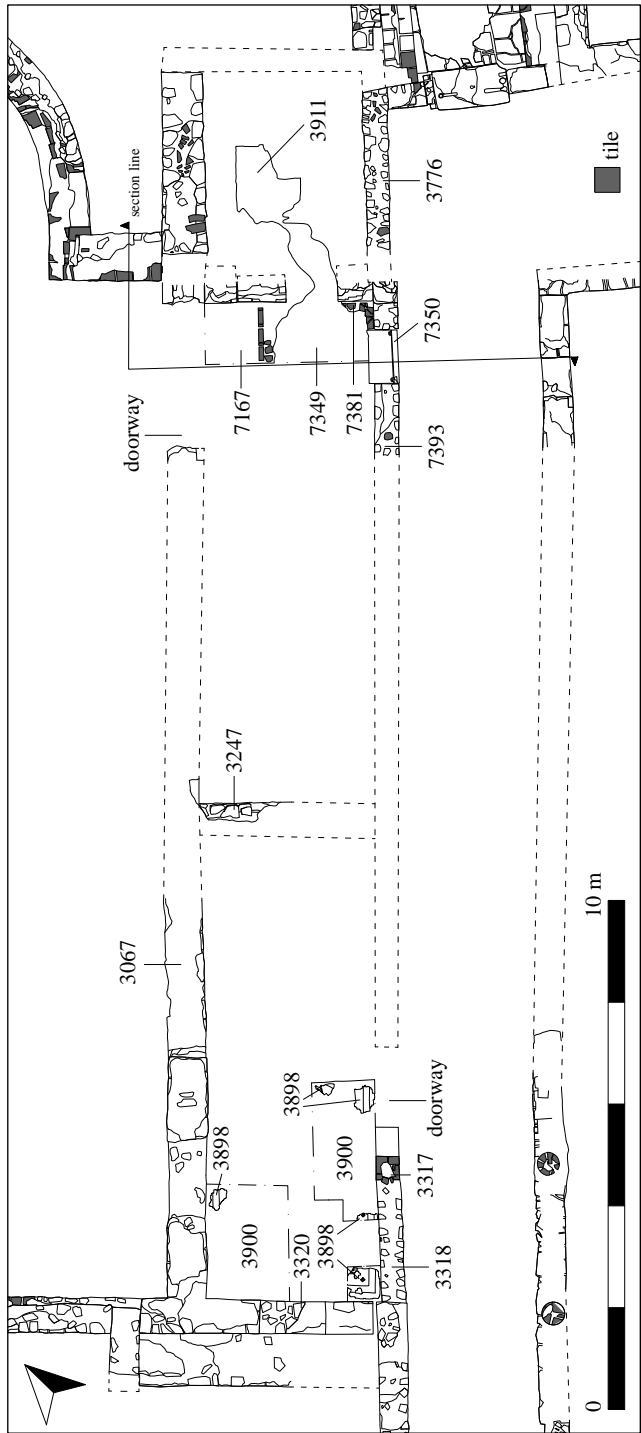


Figure 4.55. Plan of the rooms along the southern side of the apsidal hall

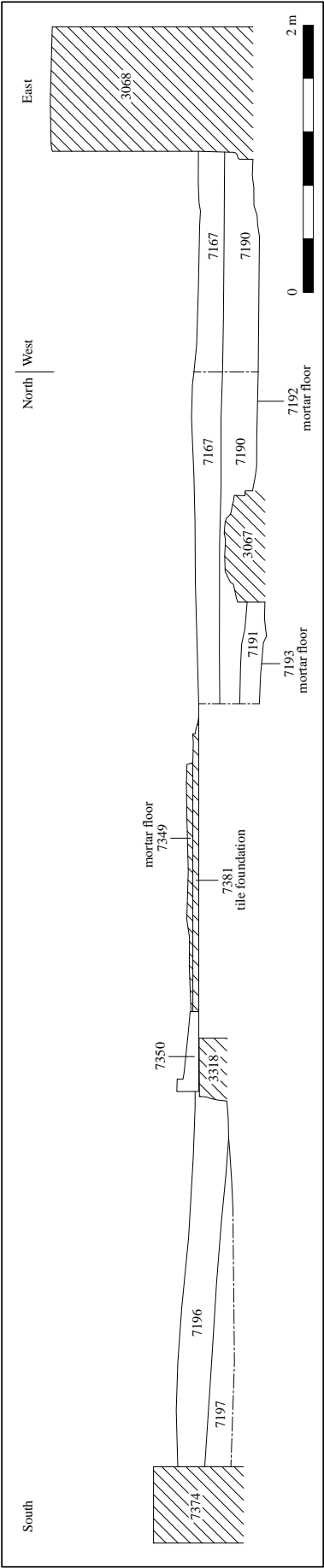


Figure 4.56. Section showing the Phase 3a levelling layers used to raise the area along the southern side of the apsidal hall. See Fig. 4.55 for location

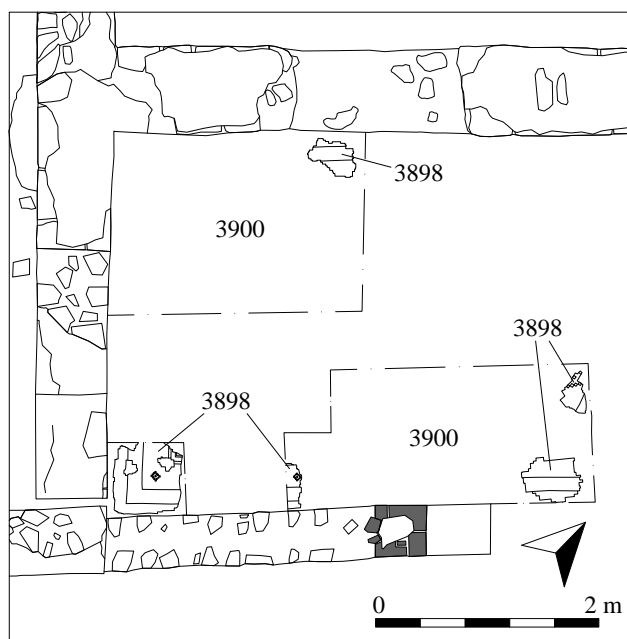


Figure 4.57. Plan of the west room along the southern side of the apsidal hall showing the fragments of surviving mosaic 3898

of the earlier building underwent a number of alterations including levelling, the addition of mosaic pavements and, to the south, a new chamber being built incorporating a hypocaust, with the *prae-furnium* cut through its eastern wall (Fig. 4.60). The elaborate nature of these new rooms appears to be very different to the northern, more public wing and it may be that this wing was reserved for the owner's family and most trusted friends and confidantes.

Following the levelling of the eastern road, the entrances along the northern frontage of Building 4 were blocked. Wall 133/3063/3415 was constructed across the entrance to Room 1, while wall 3440 closed off Room 2 (Fig. 4.61). With the doorways blocked, a thick greenish-brown silty clay (3432/7335) was spread across Room 1 to raise its level (Fig. 4.62). Mixed in with the clay was a significant amount of building debris, including pieces of tile, stones and painted fresco, presumably derived from the demolition of the buildings within the central courtyard. A coin of Nero (SF 6445/Cat. 21), minted in Butrint and depicting a palm tree on the reverse, was found within context 7335. Overlying this levelling was a beaten clay surface (3431), which forms the latest floor level exposed within Room 1 (Fig. 4.63). Measuring 0.10 m thick, the floor was very patchy as it had been damaged in antiquity and as such it is unclear whether 3431 was the actual surface of the room or if it formed the base for a stone, tile or even mosaic pavement. As part of these changes a threshold stone was laid in the doorway between Rooms 1 and 2. Extending slightly into Room 1 by 0.20 m, the door sill on the block runs along the northern side of it and suggests that rather than being new, this was an earlier threshold stone the builders cut in half to fit the doorway. This may also imply



Figure 4.58. Detail of mosaic 3898 in the southwest corner of the west room along the southern side of the apsidal hall (30 cm scale)



Figure 4.59. Aerial view of the east wing of the Phase 3a domus, looking south

that there was no door to close off the access between the two rooms.

In Room 2, a yellowy-white mortar (0.13 m thick), thought to have been the make-up layer for a floor subsequently robbed in antiquity, was traced along the western side of the room (7115) (Fig. 4.64). In the northwest corner the floor had been damaged and it could be seen that rather than having been laid over clay and demolition rubble, the floor had been supported on

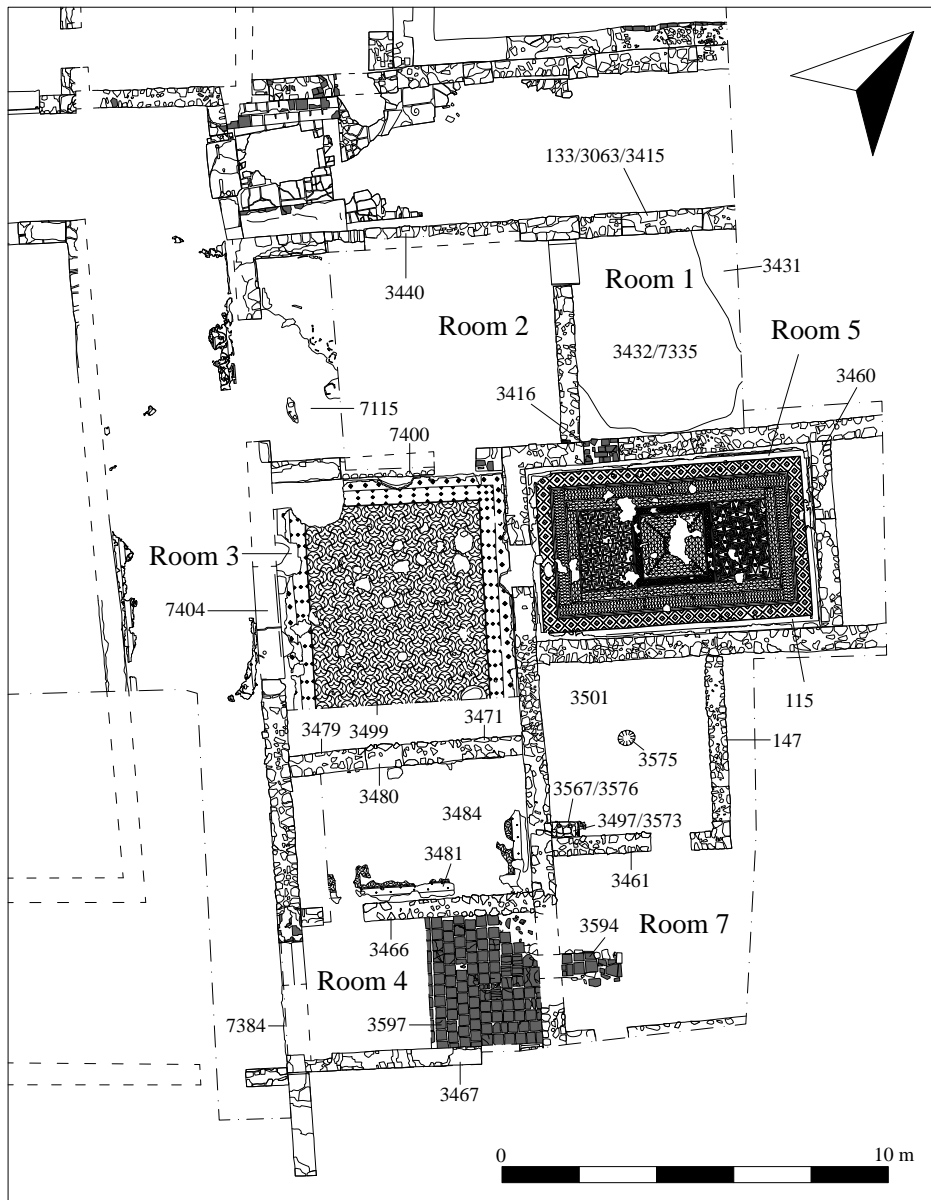
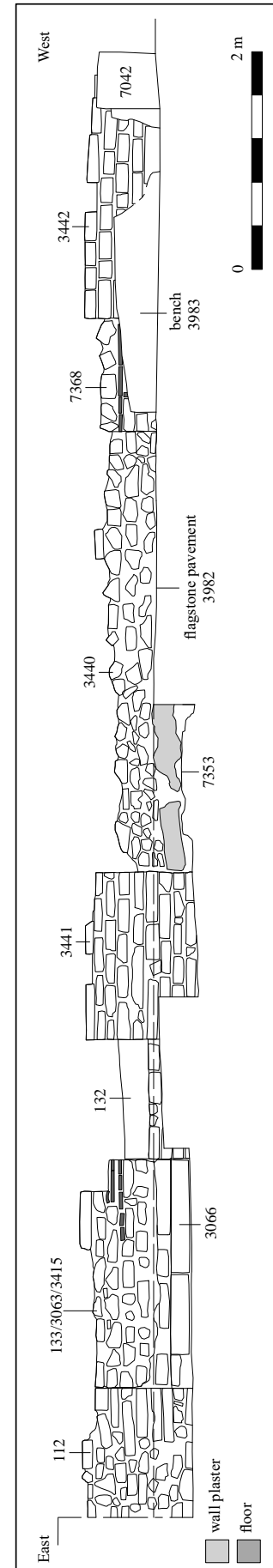


Figure 4.60. (above) The east wing

Figure 4.61. (right) North-facing elevation of the north wall of the east wing showing the Phase 3a blocking walls built across the doorways of Rooms 1 and 2

numerous complete and broken 2nd-century amphorae (Figs 4.65 and 4.66).²³ The amphorae had not been simply thrown into the room but had been deliberately laid on their sides and packed tightly together (Fig. 4.67). To prevent them moving, large rounded pebbles (7262) had been packed around them, creating a very firm and solid foundation for the overlying floor (Fig. 4.68). The reason why these amphorae were used to level the room is unclear, but since this room is originally thought to have been a shop in which amphorae would have been stored (see Chapter 3), it seems likely that during the construction of the *domus* the builders decided to incorporate the numerous vessels into the foundations of the floor rather than trying to remove them all. A fragment of an ARS A/D dish, of early to mid-3rd-century date, together with the base and toe of a 3rd-century regional amphora (7271) found among the amphorae provide a *terminus post quem* for these alterations (see Volume 6.3, Chapter 2). Similar



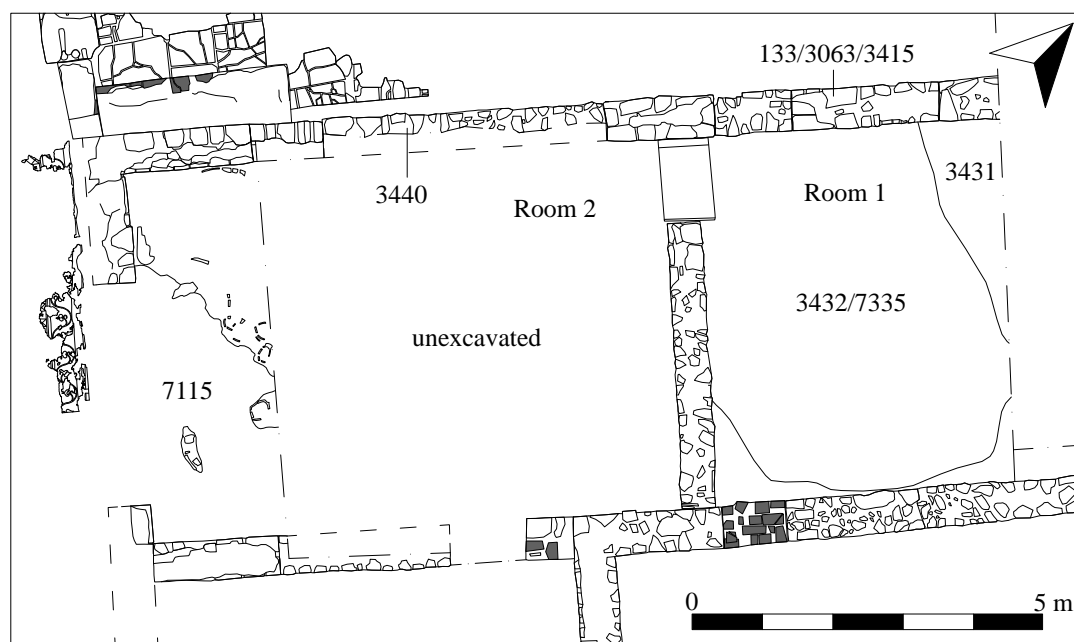


Figure 4.62. Plan of Rooms 1 and 2 of the east wing in Phase 3a



Figure 4.63. Room 1, looking northwest, showing levelling layer 3432/7335 and floor surface 3431 (1 m scale)

dating material was also found within the pebble packing 7262 around the amphorae.

Whereas in Rooms 1 and 2 the contemporary floors associated with the *domus* are thought to have been removed, this was not the case in Room 3 to the south, where a complete geometric mosaic (3499) was revealed. This has a large central field of black running peltas on a white background, surrounded by two borders in white and pink, with numerous small stepped square motifs running around them (Fig. 4.69; see also Plate 10.6) (for the full description of this mosaic see Chapter 10). The *tesserae* had been set into a layer of mortar *c.* 20 mm thick spread over a pinkish-red foundation layer (80 mm thick). In addition to the floor, a new threshold stone (7404) (2.47×0.60 m) was inserted into the western doorway leading out to the east portico, while the northern doorway, leading into Room 2, was narrowed to a width of 1.10 m by the construction of wall 7400.



Figure 4.64. Western side of Room 2, looking south, showing make-up layer 7115. Some of the underlying amphorae used as make-up for the floor can be seen through the layer (1 m scale)

Within Room 5 a second complete geometric mosaic was found (115/3426) (Fig. 4.70; see also Plate 10.3) (for the full description of this mosaic see Chapter 10). The design consisted of a central square with a framed square



Figure 4.65. Excavating the amphorae



Figure 4.68. Detail of the pebbles used as packing around the amphorae



Figure 4.66. View of the 2nd- to 3rd-century amphorae following the removal of part of the make-up layer 7115 in Room 2

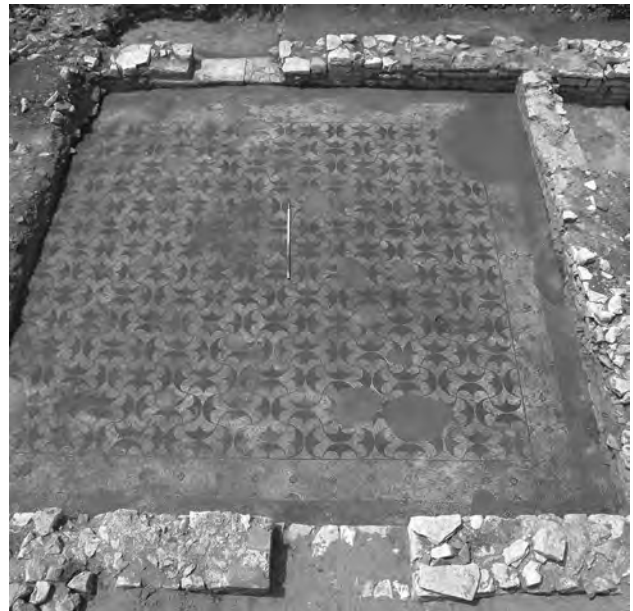


Figure 4.69. Room 3, looking west, showing the Phase 3a mosaic 3499, after conservation (1 m scale)



Figure 4.67. The amphorae, looking north, showing how they had been packed in tightly to form a firm support for the overlying floor (30 cm scale)



Figure 4.70. Room 5, looking west, showing the Phase 3a mosaic 115/3426



Figure 4.71. Blocking wall 3416 built across the doorway between Rooms 1 and 5. The wall plaster can be seen at the base of this wall (1 m scale)

emblem at its focus, adjoined to the east and west by oblong rectangular panels, surrounded by three continuous running borders; the central motif was slightly damaged. Prior to the laying of the floor the eastern and northern doors of the earlier room were blocked; wall 3460 closed off the eastern doorway and 3416, a brick-built wall, blocked the northern door (Fig. 4.71). Traces of two distinct layers of wall plaster, each consisting of an *arriccio* (mortar) and *intonaco* (plaster), were found on all four walls. The lower surface was white, while flecks of reddish-orange paint were preserved on the uppermost surface. At both ends of wall 114 the second phase of plaster appears to have terminated in a moulding which extended 0.10 m onto the mosaic. This was also noticed on the northern wall of the room, where a line of *cocciopesto* runs onto the floor.

The largest alteration undertaken at this time was to Room 4, where a set of raised reception rooms was created (Figs 4.72 and 4.73). A new wall (3467), incorporating a

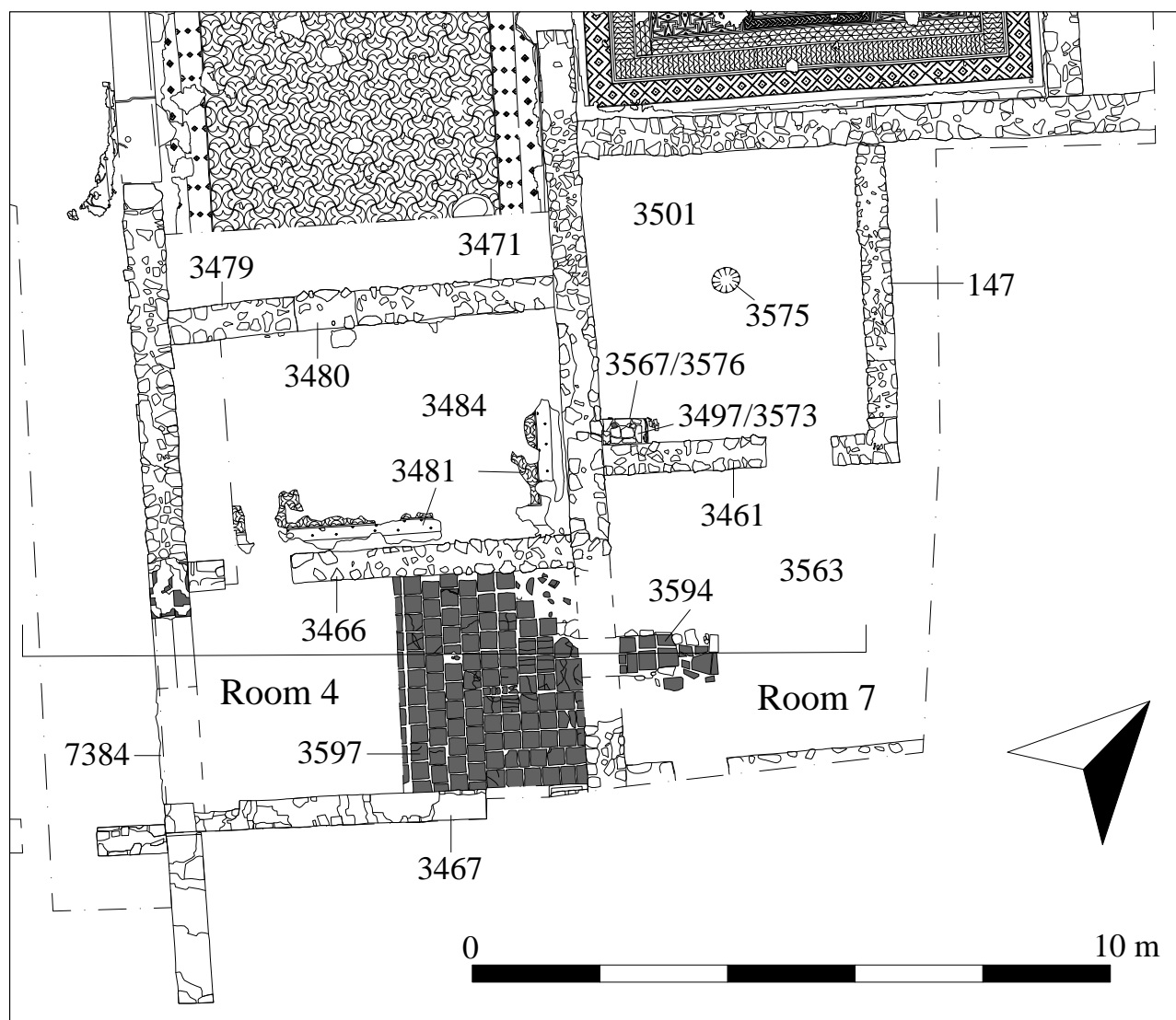


Figure 4.72. Plan of Rooms 4 and 7 of the east wing in Phase 3a, with location of reconstruction shown in Fig 4.78



Figure 4.73. The east wing, looking northwest



Figure 4.74. Wall 3467, the southern wall of the Phase 3a Room 4

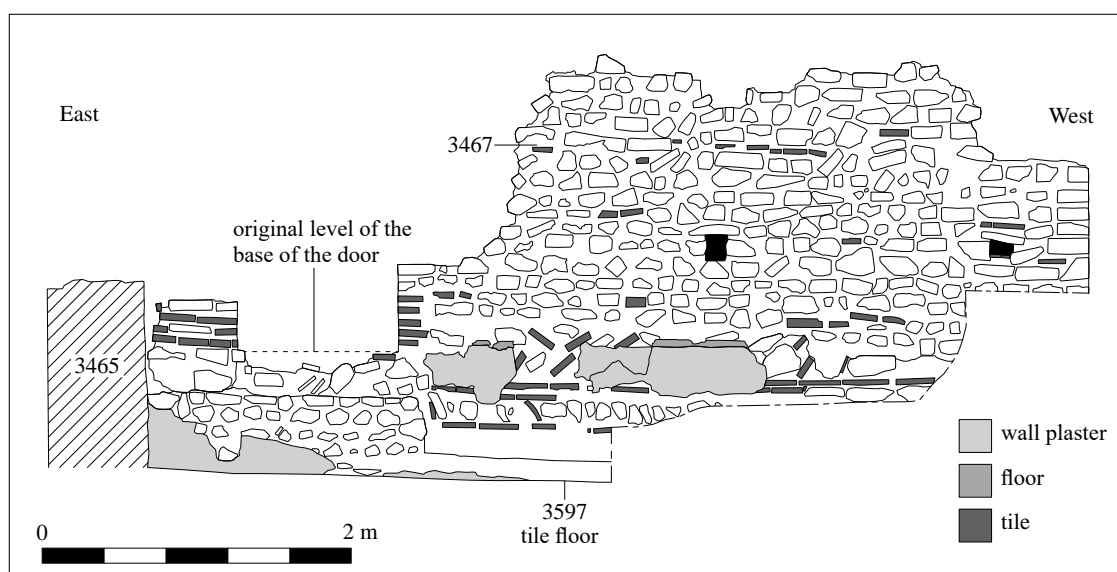


Figure 4.75. Elevation of the northern face of wall 3467, showing the fragments of mortar from the underfloor of the suspended floor still attached to the wall.



Figure 4.76. Wall 3466, the division wall of the Phase 3a Room 4. The upper part of the wall steps out slightly as it had been built partially over the suspended floor of the room (1 m scale)



Figure 4.77. The tile sub-floor 3597 in the southern room of the Phase 3a Room 4, looking east. The praefurnium can be seen at the far end of the room built into wall 3419. The blocking occurred in Phase 7

doorway 1 m wide at its eastern end, was built across the southern end of the room (Fig. 4.74). A second, similarly aligned wall (3466) was constructed to the north, dividing the room in two. A doorway at the western end of this wall allowed access between the two rooms.

Within the southern room a suspended floor was constructed, possibly supporting a mosaic pavement.²⁴ Although this floor had been destroyed in antiquity, fragments of the original pinkish-grey mortar underfloor could be seen adhering to the inner edges of walls 3467 and 3466; the upper part of wall 3466 appeared to have been partially built over the floor (Figs 4.75 and 4.76). The room's sub-floor (3597), made up of square tiles 0.28 m² set in a compact yellowish mortar, survived 0.80–0.90 m below the underfloor. Only the eastern half of this floor was exposed and apart from a few lower courses of circular *pilae* found projecting from the western section, the majority of the supports had been removed, presumably at the time the overlying floor was destroyed (Fig. 4.77). The room was accessed from the southern corner of the east portico via the western doorway of the earlier room. This door had been narrowed by the insertion of a blocking wall (7384), built up against the northern side of wall 3467, reducing the width of the door to 1.10 m. As the floor of the southern chamber was almost 0.70 m above that of the level of the portico, steps must have been set here to access the differing levels (Fig. 4.78).

The room was heated by a *praefurnium* (3594) constructed within a gap deliberately smashed through the room's eastern wall (3419) (see Figs 4.77 and 6.64).²⁵ The northern side wall of the flue was brick built, while the southern side was faced with a single width of tile. The fire chamber of the structure was located to the east of wall 3419 and had been cut through deposit 3563, a yellowy-brown clay that had been spread across Room 7 shortly before the flue's construction (Fig. 4.79). This

deposit contained ceramics dated to AD 200–50. A double row of square tiles, matching those of the sub-floor, lined the cut. Walls to contain the fire had then been built along either side of the cut, partially overlying the tiles. At the eastern end a number of larger tiles had been set directly onto layer 3563, slightly above the floor of the chamber, suggesting that at some point the firing chamber may have been slightly extended.

The fuel needed to heat the *praefurnium* appears to have been stored in a new room constructed in the northwest corner of Room 7 (Fig. 4.80). The walls of the new room (147 and 3461) were c. 0.46 m wide and are thought to have comprised a low foundation wall built of a mix of roughly shaped limestone blocks with a *pisé* superstructure. Fragments of a white render were found on the inner faces of the surviving foundation. The room was accessed by a door (1.05 m wide) located at the eastern end of wall 3461. Internally the floor of the room (3501) sealed an earlier east–west-aligned wall (148) which had been removed prior to the construction of the new room. To support the roof, a post seems to have been positioned roughly in the centre of the room, as indicated by a post-hole (3575) cut through 3501. Within the southwest corner of the room was a sub-rectangular feature (3567/3576). It is unclear what this feature may have been used for as it seems to have been infilled with a yellowish-grey silty clay (3562) soon after it was dug. The neck of a Koan-style amphora had then been set into the fill before a layer of limestone blocks and tile fragments was spread across the feature (3497/3573), apparently to cap it (Fig. 4.81). Some of the tiles at the eastern end of the capping were set on edge and against these had been placed a complete oil lamp. Dating to the late 2nd to early 3rd century, the central motif of the lamp depicted the head of Cleopatra on a discus (see Volume 6.3, Chapter 3, Fig. 3.8.13).

It is unclear whether the northern room was heated as

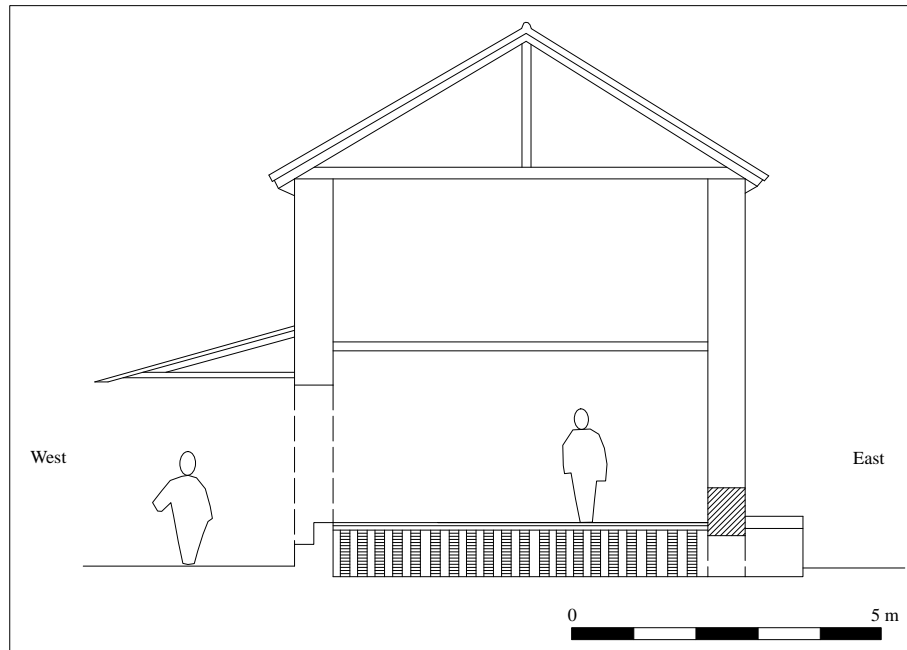


Figure 4.78. Reconstruction and profile across the portico and the southern room of Room 4 showing the different floor levels. See Fig. 4.72 for location



Figure 4.79. The fire chamber to the east of wall 3419 (1 m scale)



Figure 4.80. View of the storeroom in the northwest corner of the Phase 3a Room 7, looking north (2 × 2 m scale)



Figure 4.81. Possible limestone and tile capping 3562 found in the southwest corner of the storeroom. A complete Imperial period oil lamp with an image of the head of Cleopatra was found on top of this feature (1 m scale)



Figure 4.82. Northern room of Room 3, looking east, showing the Phase 3a mosaic 3481. The cuts visible dug through the floor relate to Phase 7 (2 m scale)



Figure 4.83. The east wing, looking north, showing the different floor levels between rooms (2 m scale)

no archway was found within wall 3466 to allow the heat to circulate from the southern room and it may be that the room was levelled over with a sequence of rubble and clay in-fills.²⁶ The fragmentary remains of a very fine geometric mosaic (3481) with a central field of running peltas were found around the sides of the room (Fig. 4.82) (for the full description of this mosaic see Chapter 10). The *tesserae* had been set into a thick skim of plaster (3483) spread over a pinkish-grey mortar (3484) which extended across the whole room. The floor was almost 0.50 m above the floor level found in Room 3 to the north, although it appears to have been slightly lower than that of the southern room (Figs 4.83 and 4.84). Traces of wall plaster, with hints of pink paint, were preserved on the southern wall, running down behind the mosaic pavement. The only access to the room was from the south as the original door in the northern wall (3479/3471), which had connected Rooms 4 and 3, was blocked (3480).

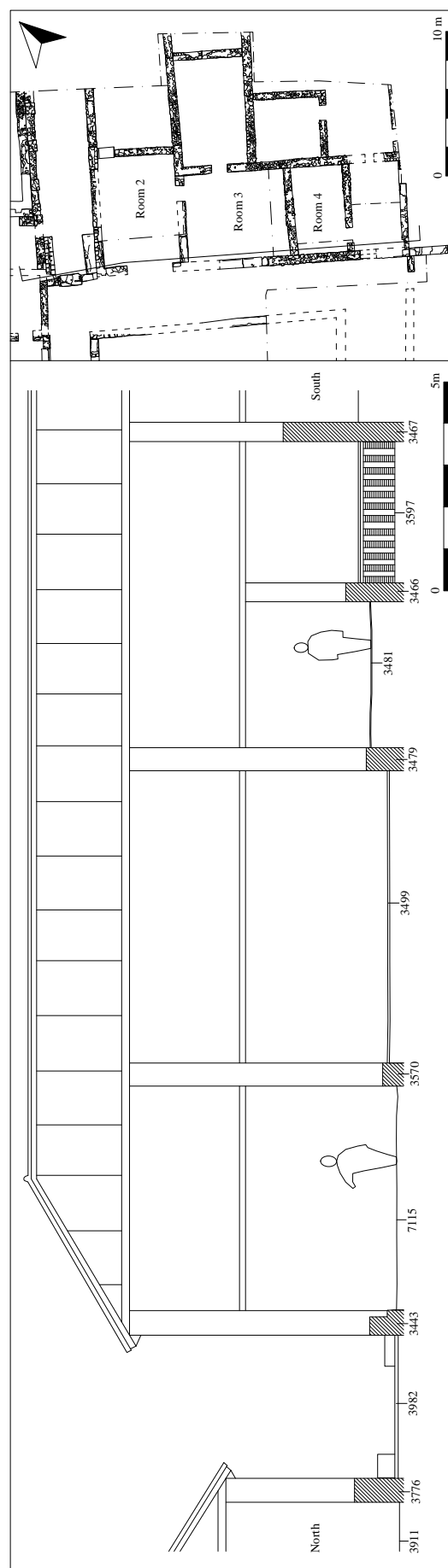


Figure 4.84. Reconstruction profile showing the different floor levels between Rooms 2, 3 and 4 of the east wing together with the eastern approach road

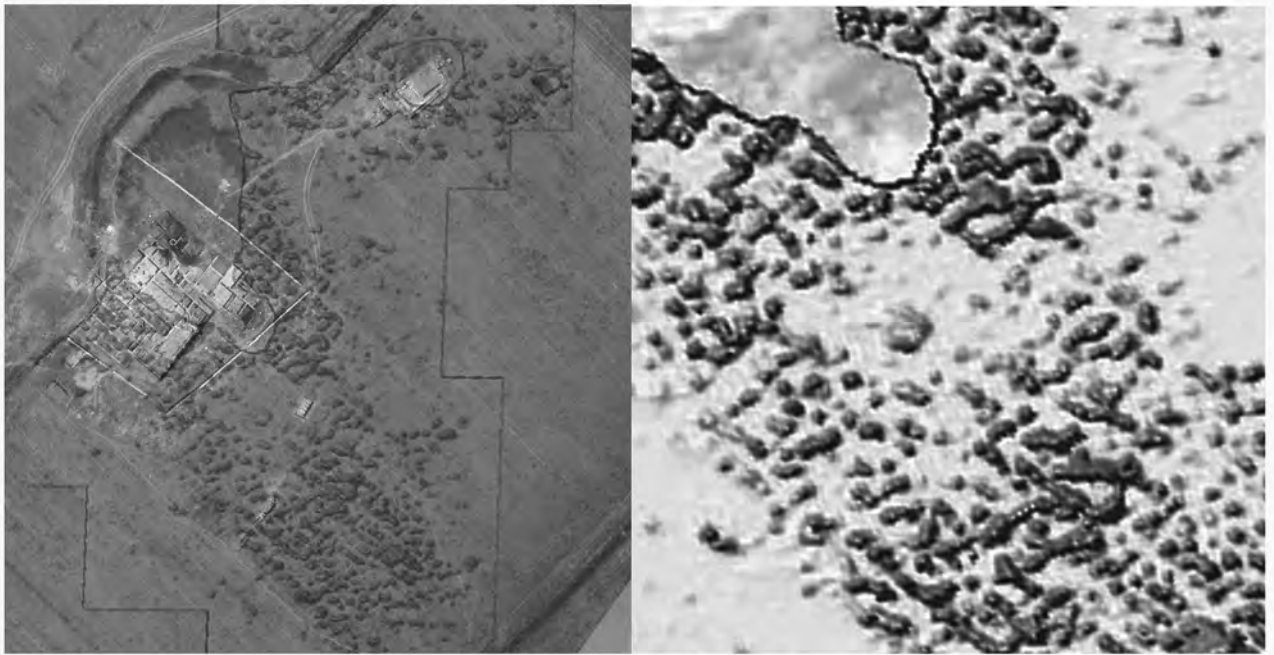


Figure 4.85. Geophysical plot overlaid on excavated area, with detail of possible second, southern courtyard and triclinium



Figure 4.86. Excavations in the southern courtyard showing the thick layer of clay (7807), containing ceramics dated to the late 3rd century, spread across the area to form the surface of the new courtyard

The Southern Buildings

Based upon the evidence of the geophysical survey, the Vrina Plain *domus* is thought to have had two courtyards, with the larger of the two located to the south of the main excavations (Fig. 4.85).²⁷ As with the northern courtyard, any earlier buildings located within the proposed area of the new courtyard were demolished prior to its construction. This can be seen clearly in the southeast corner of the southern courtyard where Building 6 was demolished at this time, the walls of the building being dismantled to the level

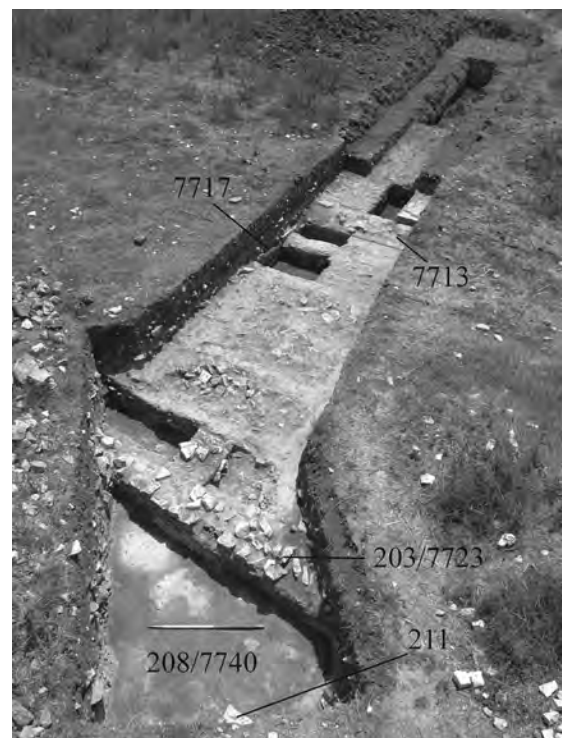


Figure 4.87. View west of the western trench in the southern half of the domus showing the walls and floors of the three rooms revealed (1 m scale)

of the mosaic floors. With the building removed, a thick layer of greyish-green clay silt (7807) containing residual Hellenistic and Late Republican ceramics was spread across the area to form the surface of the new courtyard (Fig. 4.86).

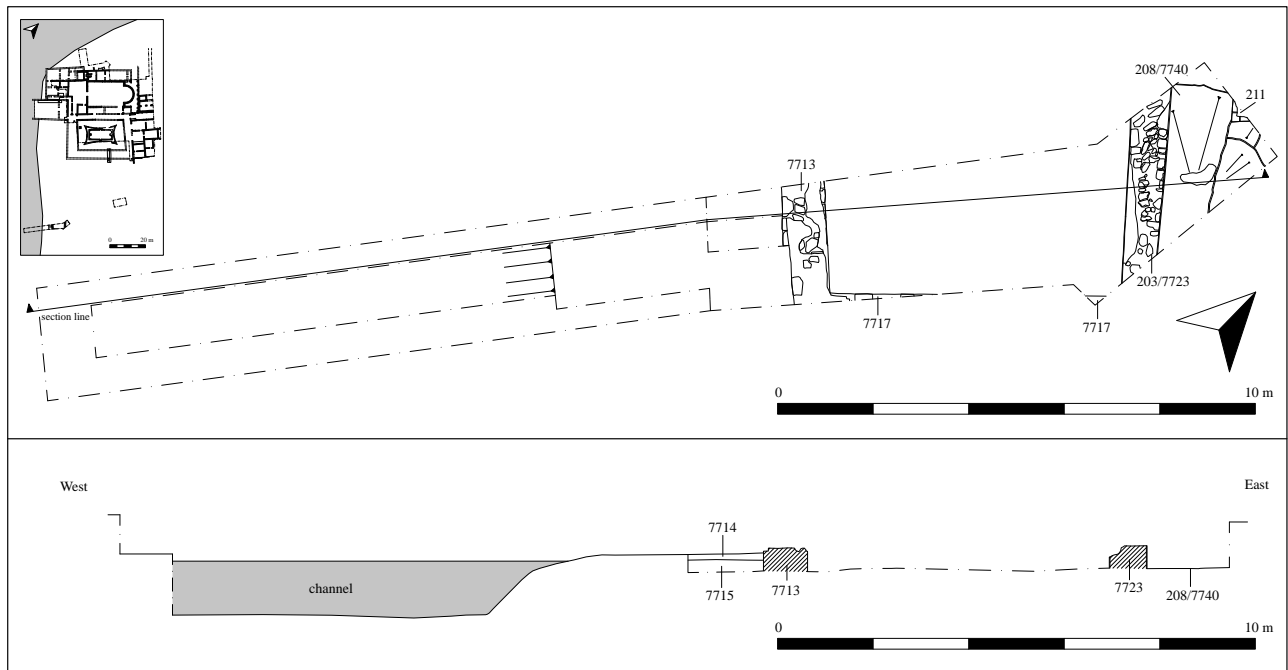


Figure 4.88. Plan and section of the western trench in the southern half of the domus

A comparison of the heights of the two courtyards seems to suggest that the surface of the southern courtyard was 0.50 m higher than that of the northern courtyard.

The only contemporary building investigated within the southern half of the *domus* was located just beyond the southwest corner of the courtyard, where at least two rooms (and possibly a third) of a substantial building on the edge of the inlet channel were exposed, defined by walls 203/7723, 7713 and 7717 (Fig. 4.87). These walls had all been keyed into each other and comprised a compact limestone rubble core faced with neatly coursed limestone blocks, bonded with a mottled greyish-yellow sandy mortar. The two main rooms were separated by wall 203/7723. In the east room, of which only a small area was exposed (c. 3.41 × 2.46 m), a compact creamy-white *opus signinum* floor surface (208/7740) was revealed. Wall plaster on the inner edge of wall 203/7723 was found to lip out slightly over the floor; this had then been smoothed onto the surface to seal the two. In the northeast corner of the trench the southern end of a stone-built structure (211) was found, 1.33 m to the east of wall 7723. Both visible faces of 211 retained a layer of wall plaster. This joined with the *opus signinum* floor surface in the same way as the plaster on wall 7723, suggesting 211 and 7723 were contemporary builds. Due to the limited area of 211 exposed it is difficult to define its function, but as it appears to be on a similar orientation to wall 7723 it may have formed the southern end of a wall, with the southern gap defining a doorway, thereby implying that this eastern room had been sub-divided into two areas.

Originally these eastern rooms appear to have been elaborately decorated as several pieces of plaster *stucco* (SF 6306), together with numerous fragments of moulded

plaster, were found within the Phase 5 demolition layer (7727) sealing floor 208/7740. Numerous pieces of painted wall plaster, some with red bands and others with blue/black lines, were also recovered from 7727.

In contrast to the east room, three sides of the southern end of the west room were exposed, with walls 7723, 7717 and 7713 forming the eastern, southern and western walls of the room respectively. The room measured 6.15 m east–west. Due to later alterations, the original floor surface of this room was not found (see below), but fragments of wall plaster were visible along the western edge of wall 7723, sealed beneath a *cocciopesto* floor (7722/205) that is thought to have been added in a subsequent phase. As the plaster matched that seen along the eastern face of the wall, this suggests that like the east room, this room also had an *opus signinum* floor surface.

The west room faced onto the inlet channel. As a result, wall 7713 was built on a wide offset foundation, the build of which matched that of the foundation of the marine entrance. The foundation had been constructed through a series of greenish-brown silty clay alluvial deposits (7715 and 7714) that appear to have fronted the channel, the edge of which was located c. 5 m to the west (Fig. 4.88). Coring at the channel edge indicated that the underlying gravels sloped gently downwards from this point for another metre before levelling out at approximately 2.10 m below the present ground surface. A core taken 40 m west of wall 7713 found the gravels to be at the same level, thereby confirming that this western area had been open water.

Summary/Interpretation

From the mid-3rd century the occupation on the Vrina Plain

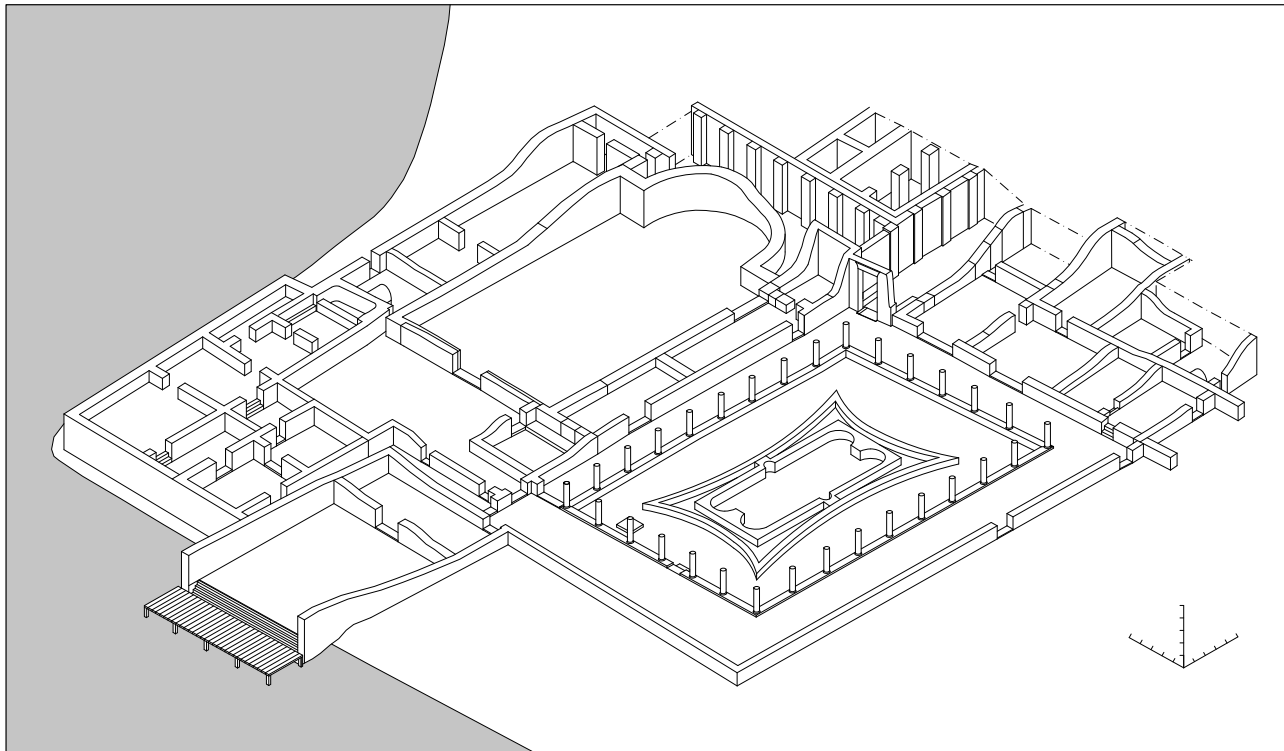


Figure 4.89. Axonometric reconstruction of the domus in Phase 3a

was altered with the construction of a large and spacious *domus* over most of the former western suburb (Fig. 4.89). The northern part of the house was laid out around a large peristyle courtyard containing an elaborate ornamental central pool. The porticoes framing the courtyard, which were paved with well-made geometric mosaics, were slightly raised to provide clear views into the courtyard and the complex design of the central pool.

Two opposing entrances, from east and west, gave access to the *domus* via the north portico, a layout at odds with the traditional Early Imperial axial layout of peristyle houses, but characteristic of the Late Imperial period, as seen in the contemporary *domus* and later Triconch Palace at Butrint. The principal public entrance was the eastern entrance. Decorated with an ornamental lintel, this door fronted onto the former east–west road, which had been levelled up and resurfaced with new flagstones. Flanking the outside of the doorway were two benches, probably built to accommodate the attendants and slaves of visiting clients. To the west, fronting a wide subsidiary inlet channel of the Vivari Channel, was the more prestigious marine entrance which comprised two rooms. The eastern room, which led into the portico via a doorway in its southeastern corner, had a well-made geometric mosaic pavement and was originally faced in marble, fragments of which were found still adhering to the walls. The western room was a much larger space with a *cocciopesto* floor.

The primary public space seems to have been to the north of the courtyard, centred on a large apsidal hall. This appears similar to later (4th-century) audience chambers

where the owner, seated in the apse, would have received his clients and business associates.²⁸ The room was orientated east–west with the apse at the eastern end of the structure and the main doorway opposite it in the western wall. Assuming that windows would have been located along its northwestern side, this chamber would have been cool and bright in the early part of the day and would have benefited from the late evening light of the setting sun, making it an ideal setting for the owner to welcome and impress his visitors in.²⁹

The hall was entered from the west. To reach this entrance from the peristyle, guests would have used a door at the northern end of the west portico. From here, they would have accessed a corridor that then led out onto an open courtyard directly in front of the main door of the hall. To reach this door, guests arriving by the eastern entrance would have walked along the entire length of the north portico, thereby allowing them a view across the pool to the private area of the house beyond the peristyle. Such a partial glimpse into the owner's private space was deliberately managed and must have heightened the visitor's impression of the owner's bearing in society even before they were admitted to an audience with him. The opulence of the marine entrance and glimpses of the eastern and western wings of the house would undoubtedly have had a similar effect on those arriving by the western entrance.

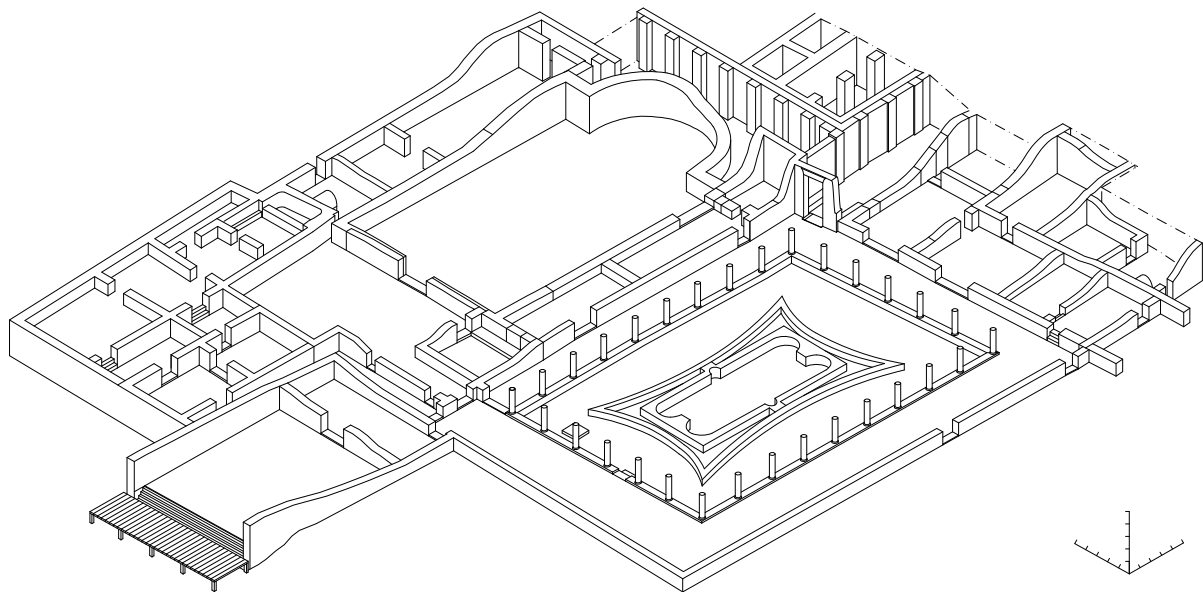
After the official business had been completed, the visitor, rather than going back the way he had come, seems to have left the hall by a door located in the southeastern corner of the room. Beyond this was a small room, one of



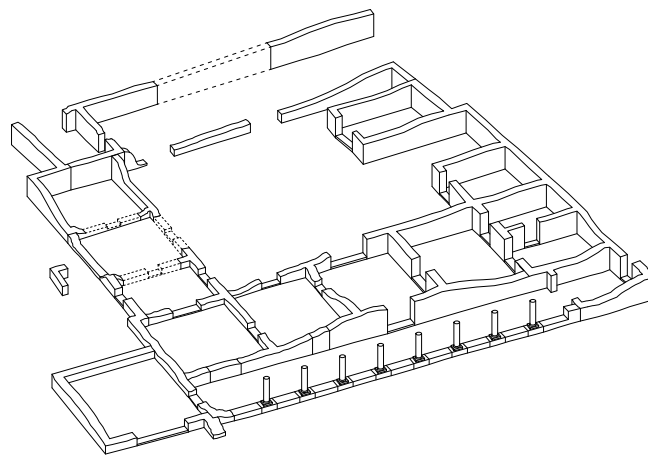
Figure 4.90. The mid-3rd- to mid-4th-century Vrina Plain domus complex superimposed onto the geophysical plot of the area

a series located to the north of the portico, which led back to the eastern end of the portico and thence to the main door; visitors using the western entrance would have had to walk back along the north portico, ensuring they too could see the villa's opulence.

Prior to an official audience a visitor would presumably have gone to the baths to wash before presenting themselves to their host.³⁰ Business may also have been discussed in the bath-house as bathing remained an important social as well as leisure activity. In order to accommodate his guests,



Vrina Plain, Butrint



Triconch Palace, Butrint

Figure 4.91. A comparison of the 3rd-century Vrina Plain domus and the Triconch domus

the owner constructed a bath-house to the northwest of the house; a wall running from the northeastern corner of this building parallel to the audience hall seems to demarcate the channel edge and suggests that it was constructed on the edge of the main Vivari Channel. Like the hall, the bath-house was accessed from northern end of the west portico. A second door, to the west of the one that accessed the apsidal hall, led into a corridor aligned with the outer wall of the western entrance chamber. This corridor opened out into a series of rooms, possibly changing rooms, connected with the bath-house.

The eastern area of the *domus* appears to have been the private part of the house, restricted to the owner's most trusted friends and confidantes. The eastern portico gave access to a series of elaborately furnished rooms that utilised the earlier buildings located here. This seems to have involved the blocking of a number of doorways as well as laying a sequence of new mosaic floors.

Little of the southern portico has been uncovered. However, where it has been identified it is clear that doorways were located in its southern wall indicating that the portico opened on to a series of rooms or corridors

beyond. Unlike the other porticoes, all of which gave access to various rooms of the villa, the western portico seems to have formed an open gallery that would have afforded views to the Straits of Corfu and Cape Stillo beyond. It would also have provided a contrast between the natural landscape on the one side and the man-made pool on the other; this contrast would have been even more accentuated when viewed from the eastern portico, where the view would have been framed by the architectural elements of the peristyle.

The full extent of the *domus* is unclear. From the

geophysical survey it would appear that it could potentially continue to the south where a further, much larger, courtyard has been identified, surrounded by a portico and various ranges of rooms, including what appears to be another apsidal hall and a triple-apsed *triclinium* (Fig. 4.90).³¹ If this is so, the house would have covered an area of roughly 11,400 m² (c. 1 ha).³² By comparison, the contemporary townhouse that occupied the central area of the later Triconch Palace covered an area of roughly 1372 m² (0.13ha) (Fig. 4.91).³³ At Nicopolis, the city founded by Octavian after his victory at Actium, the on-

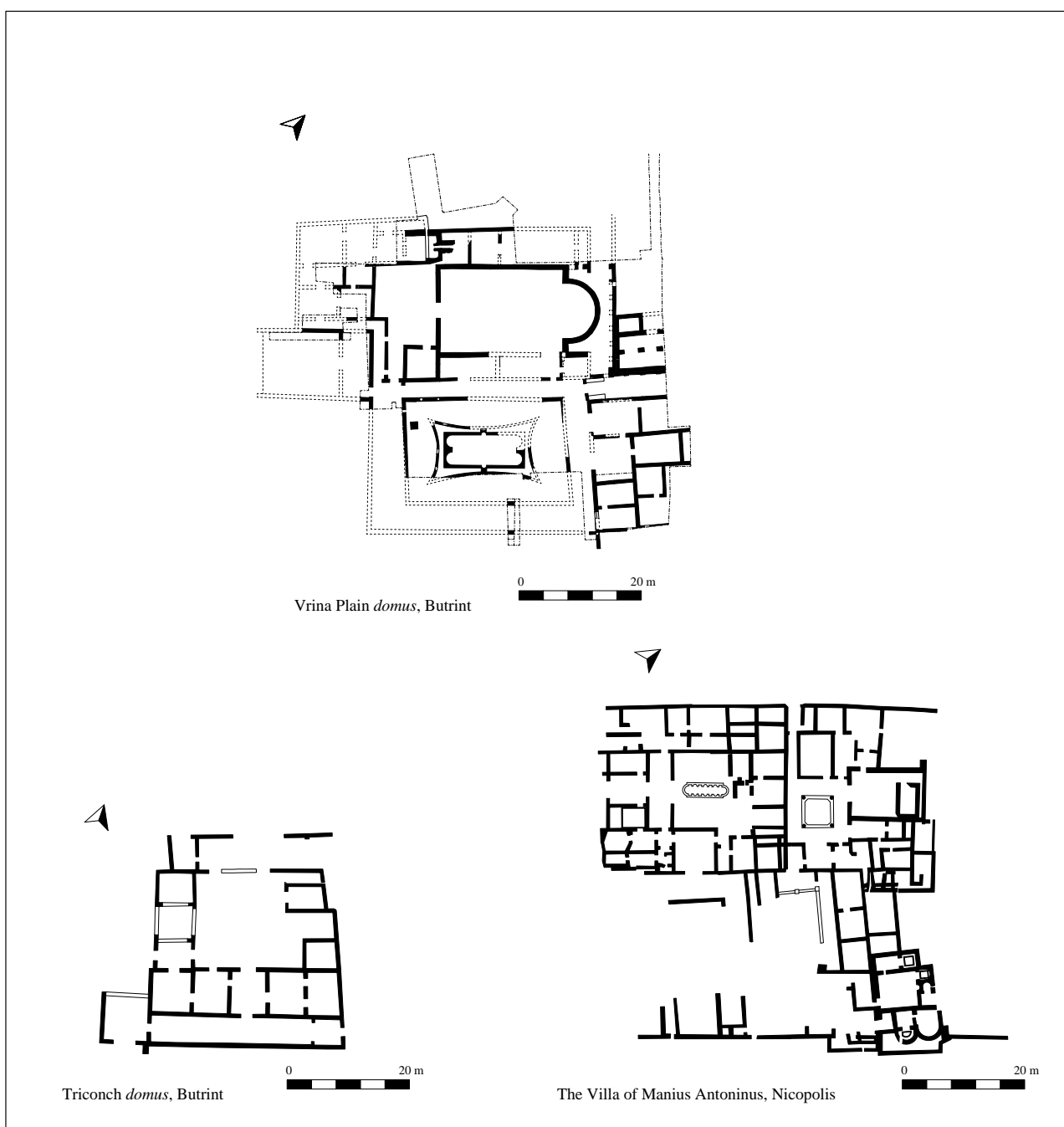


Figure 4.92. The 3rd-/4th-century Vrina Plain domus, the Triconch domus and the villa of Manius Antoninus at Nicopolis (the latter after Tsakoumis 2006)

going excavations at the Villa of Manius Antoninus have uncovered almost 3384 m² (0.34 ha) of a similar luxury private residence from this period in the heart of the city (Fig. 4.92).³⁴

The status of the owner may have been further accentuated by the presence of the Temple Mausoleum located to the northeast (see Chapter 8). Not only would this structure have formed an appropriate monumental resting place for the owner and his family, its dominant position adjacent to the main road also demarcated the principal access point to the house.

The division of space and the control applied to movement and access around the site may be related to the dual role of a large 3rd-century *domus* at a time when political life appears to have moved away from the monumental centres that had been the heart of a Roman city in the early empire.³⁵ Due to the political and economic instability of the empire, local élites no longer saw civic public office as desirable and shifted their interest to new rural settings, diverting their surplus resources into constructing large, private residential buildings that became the stages on which the social and political order would be played out.³⁶ In this process the house became not only a private domestic space for the owner and his family to enjoy but also a public space in which business had to be accommodated in a setting befitting the owner's standing in Epirote society.³⁷

Phase 3b: Early to mid-4th century AD (Fig. 4.93)

During the first half of the 4th century the *domus* remained occupied although a number of alterations were made to it.

The eastern area

The external appearance of the apsidal hall was altered with the construction of a new wall (144) around the eastern end of the building that appears to have been built to encase the apse (Fig. 4.94). The wall measured 14.84 m north–south and incorporated a 1.40 m east–west return at its southern end. Built in an *opus incertum* style, the walls were 0.55 m wide. Where it encircled the apse, the width of the wall narrowed to 0.20 m. At the northern end of the

wall was a doorway which gave entry to a newly created space (directly to the north of the apse) that provided access to the eastern rooms along the north side of the apsidal hall. Underlying the northern end of the wall was a mixed deposit of grey clay silt (7127) containing frequent mortar lumps. This deposit had built up across the area prior to the construction of the wall, sealing the earlier surface (7129) of the road that had led to the Vivari Channel.³⁸

The southern return of the wall created a new space directly to the south of the apse, although unlike the northern space it had no obvious means of access, suggesting this space may not have been utilised. Infilling this area and overlying the slight offset foundation of wall 144 was a thick, dark greyish-brown clayey silt (7183) which contained ceramics dating to AD 350–70 (see Fig. 4.49).

At the same time that wall 144 was being constructed it appears that the northern end of the Phase 1 road wall (103) was demolished to the level of its foundation. The cut (7130) used to remove the lower courses of wall 103 was dug through the deposits that had built up either side of the wall in the period since its construction (7132 to the east of the wall and 7128 to the west). The pier bases 7367, 7387 and 7388 along the western side of the wall, thought to be an offshoot of the *diverticulum* built as part of the Phase 2 alterations of the suburb, were also removed at this time. Following this a series of levelling deposits were then spread across the area (7126, 7125, 7124/7134/3972/7133 and 7123) (Fig. 4.95). Deposits 7125 and 7126 were both isolated dumps of material found against the eastern face of wall 144. In the case of 7125 this was a small area of ash, possibly the residue of a fire lit by workmen involved in the transformation of this area. Overlying these deposits was 7124/7134, a mixed grey silty clay varying in depth between 0.23–0.38 m. This deposit sealed 7131, the fill of the robber cut 7130, and extended (as 3972/7133) into the eastern area beyond the line of wall 103. It also covered the piers of the offshoot of the *diverticulum*. The northern extent of the deposit (7124) did not quite reach the eastern face of wall 144 and instead a mid-green clay deposit (7123) was spread across this area. Deposit 7123 also continued through the doorway within wall 144 and extended (as 7093) up to the eastern face of wall 7029. Within this western space a further levelling deposit was then spread across the area at this time to bring it to a consistent level (7092) (see Fig. 4.48). All these levelling deposits sealed the lower courses of wall 144 and contained a mixed ceramic assemblage including 2nd- and 3rd-century material. Deposit 7132 also contained 4th-century ceramics while 7092 contained ceramics dating to the mid-4th century.

This levelling episode also extended to the south, where the construction of wall 144 had created a small passageway, with the eastern side formed by the southern part of the Phase 1 road wall 103. Although much of the area between these walls had been removed as part of a clearance excavation undertaken by the Albanian Institute of Archaeology, evidence for this levelling was revealed

Table 4.3. Overview of the development of the Vrina Plain settlement: Phase 3b

Phase	Date	Summary
3b	Early–mid-4th century	Encasing wall built behind the apse of hall and new bath-house added to east. Octagonal tower added to western bath-house. Small-scale alterations to East Wing and Southern Building

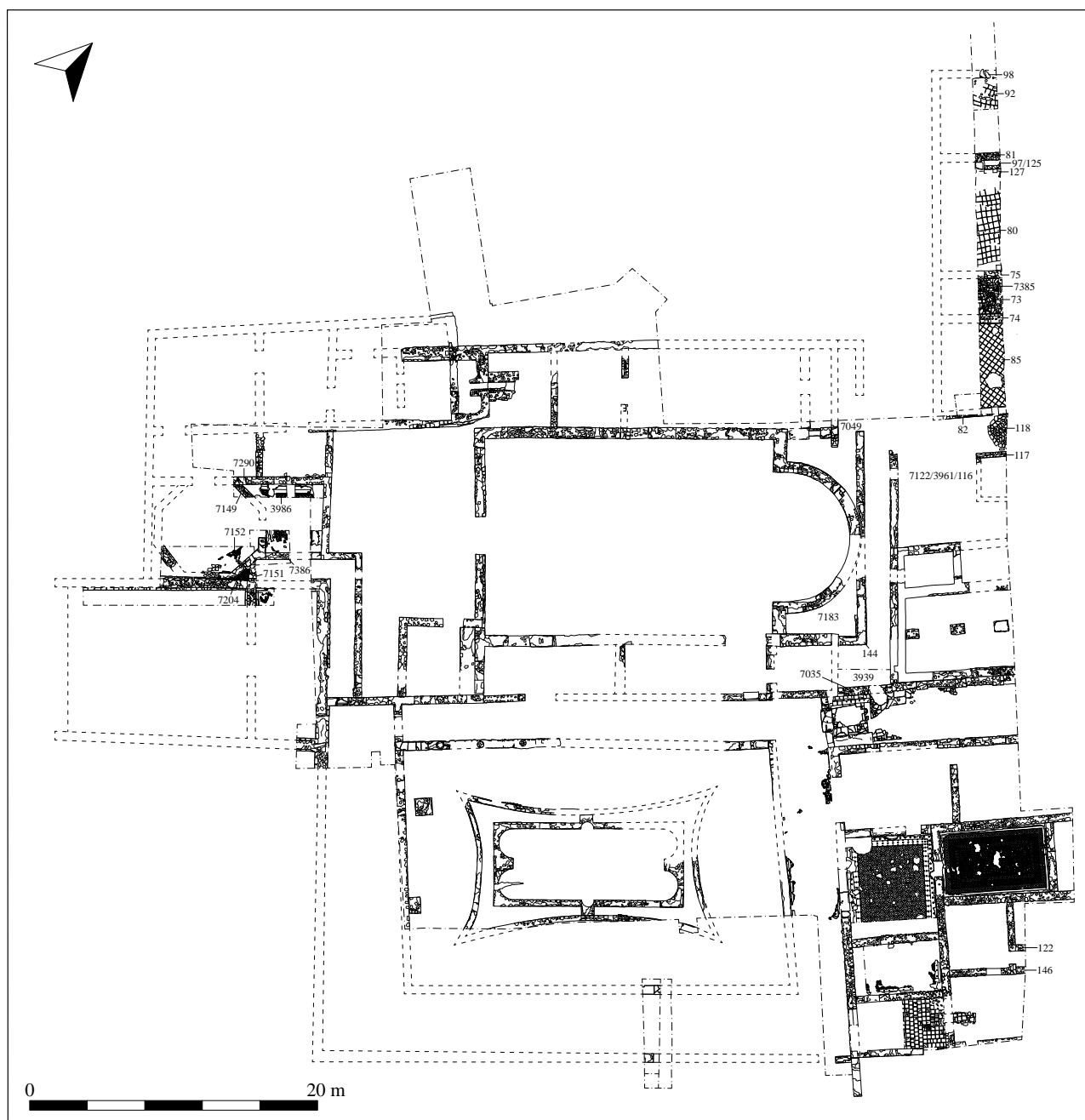


Figure 4.93. The Vrina Plain settlement showing areas of activity in Phase 3b (early to mid-4th century)

at the southern end of the passage where a greyish-brown silty clay (3946) (0.40 m thick) containing frequent rubble and tile fragments was revealed. The southern edge of this deposit was found to bank-up against the northern face of the blocking wall 7035, while to the east it covered the southern pier of the demolished offshoot of the *diverticulum*.

Once levelled, a new building appears to have been constructed in the northeast corner of the area (Fig. 4.96). So far only four rooms of this building have been uncovered (Rooms D–G), defined by walls 82, 74, 75, 81 and 98 (Fig. 4.97).³⁹ All of these rooms appear to have been equipped

with some form of under-floor heating and it is possible that it may have been a bath-house. The offset foundation of wall 82, the southern wall of the building, had been cut through layer 3972 (Fig. 4.98). Once the building had been constructed, a light yellowish-brown sandy layer (7122/3961/116) containing small fragments of tile, limestone and mortar flecks was spread across the area. This surface (as context 7049) also continued through the door in wall 144, over which a threshold was laid. It also extended along the southern passage way (3939).

Room D, the southern room of the bath-house, was a substantial chamber bounded by walls 82/94 and 74. These

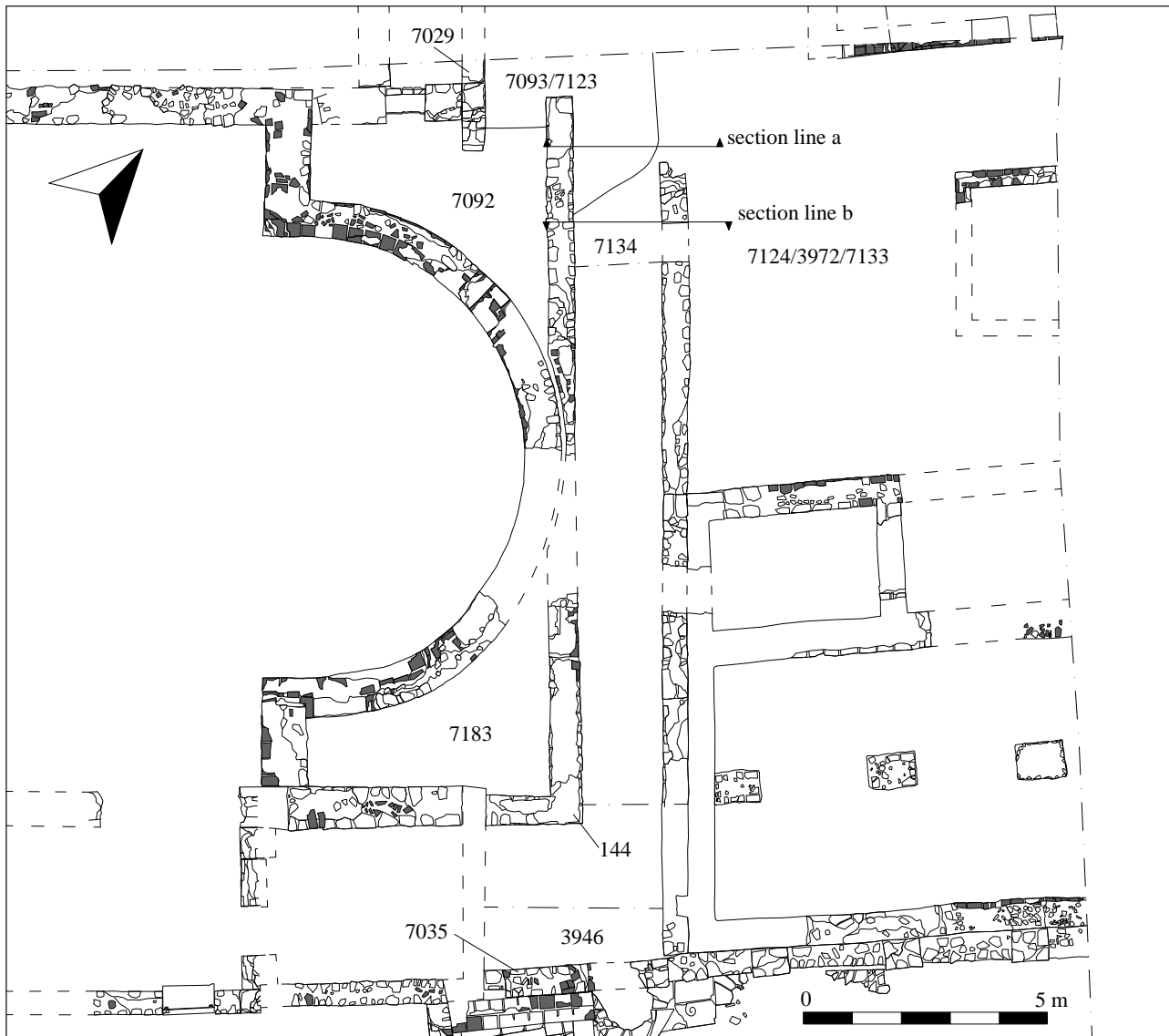


Figure 4.94. Plan of the Phase 3b alterations made to the apse of the apsidal hall and the area to the east of it

walls were well constructed from triangular tiles with thin courses of mortar and the interior of at least the northern wall was covered with a coating of plain white rendering, as could be seen from the collapsed remains of its upper levels. The surviving sub-floor of the room (85) was made of firmly laid tiles (0.30×0.30 m) placed diagonally across the room (Fig. 4.99). The room was partially heated from a source outside the building as indicated by a blocked hypocaust flue within wall 82. A semicircular area of paving (118) made up of broken tiles edged with limestone slabs, constructed directly in front of the flue and overlying deposit 7122/3961/116, appears to have been where the fire to heat the adjacent room would have been set (Fig. 4.100). Measuring 2.10 m north–south, the southern edge of the firing floor was defined by wall 117, an L-shaped wall built of tile and limestone that emerged from the eastern edge of the trench edge for 2 m before terminating in a short return to the south.

Room E was a much smaller and narrower space, possibly forming a corridor between the various chambers. Unlike the other rooms of the bath-house, the suspended floor of the room survived (73), made up of square tiles (0.28 m^2) placed diagonally across the space (Fig. 4.101). This floor was found to be almost 0.50 m above the tile sub-floors of the surrounding rooms of the bath-house. At some point a second floor (7385), composed of larger tiles some 0.42 m^2 in size, was added. Unlike the earlier floor the tiles of this new floor had been placed side-by-side.

The largest room of the bath-house, with an internal width of 7.70 m, appears to have been Room F, delimited by walls 81 and 75 to the north and south (respectively). These walls were partly constructed of coursed tile, with the remaining sections built of mortared limestone masonry in an *opus incertum* style. Apart from one tile surviving in the southeast corner of the room, all that remained of the sub-floor was the mortar bedding (80) (Fig. 4.102).

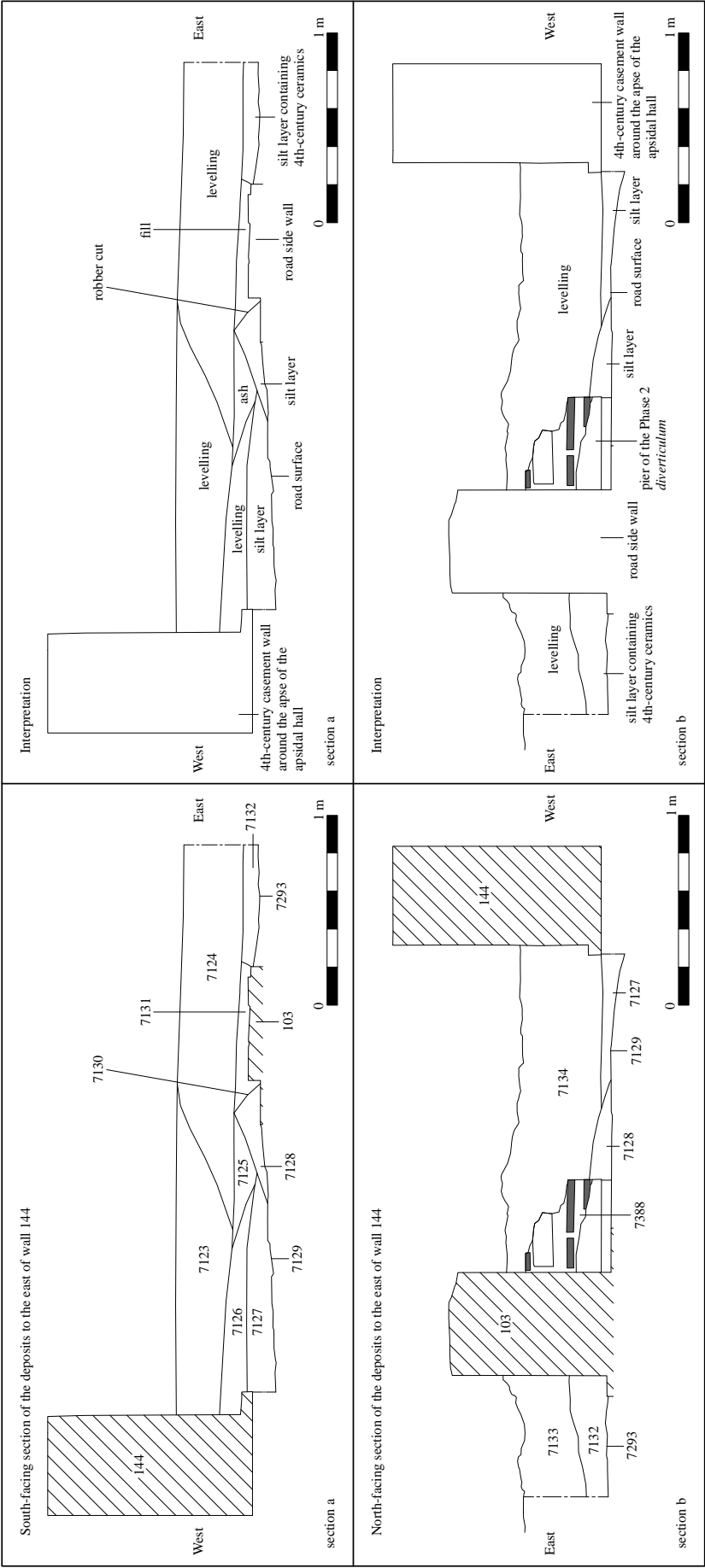


Figure 4.95. North- and south-facing sections across the former channel road showing the deposits infilling it. See Fig. 4.94 for locations

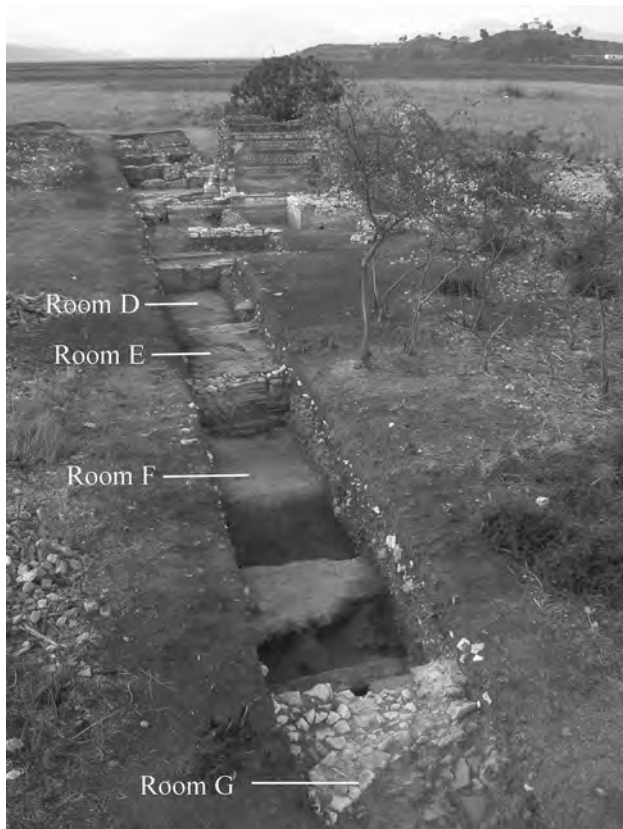


Figure 4.96. The Phase 3b eastern bath-house, looking south

Impressions within the mortar indicate that the tiles had been laid side-by-side and were 0.35 m². In two places, towards the northern side of the room, the floor had dramatically subsided into what appeared to be a series of linear features, possibly the remains of two robbed-out walls, the backfill of which had shifted following earth tremors in the proceeding centuries (see Chapter 3).

Against the southern face of wall 81 a drain was located (0.50 m wide by 0.70 m deep) sealed beneath the sub-floor (80). Constructed as part of the original build of the room, wall 81 formed the northern side of the drain. An L-shaped brick-built wall (127) formed the southern side and western end of the drain, while a capping of large tiles (97/125) (0.56 × 0.47 m) sealed it.⁴⁰ This room had been elaborately decorated as numerous fragments of mouldings and veneers in grey marble, together with painted plaster in blues, reds, greens and yellow on white and yellow backgrounds were found in the make-up and demolition levels (78 and 72) infilling the room. Fragments of *tegulae mammate*, used to heat the walls, were also recovered from the destruction rubble.

To the north was a further heated space, Room G. The form of this room is uncertain as its northern wall had collapsed. Despite this a fragment of the wall's foundation (98), along with evidence of the room's mortar sub-floor (92), was located. To the north of the foundation a thick green alluvial deposit was exposed, indicating that this room lay on the northern limits of the habitable area.

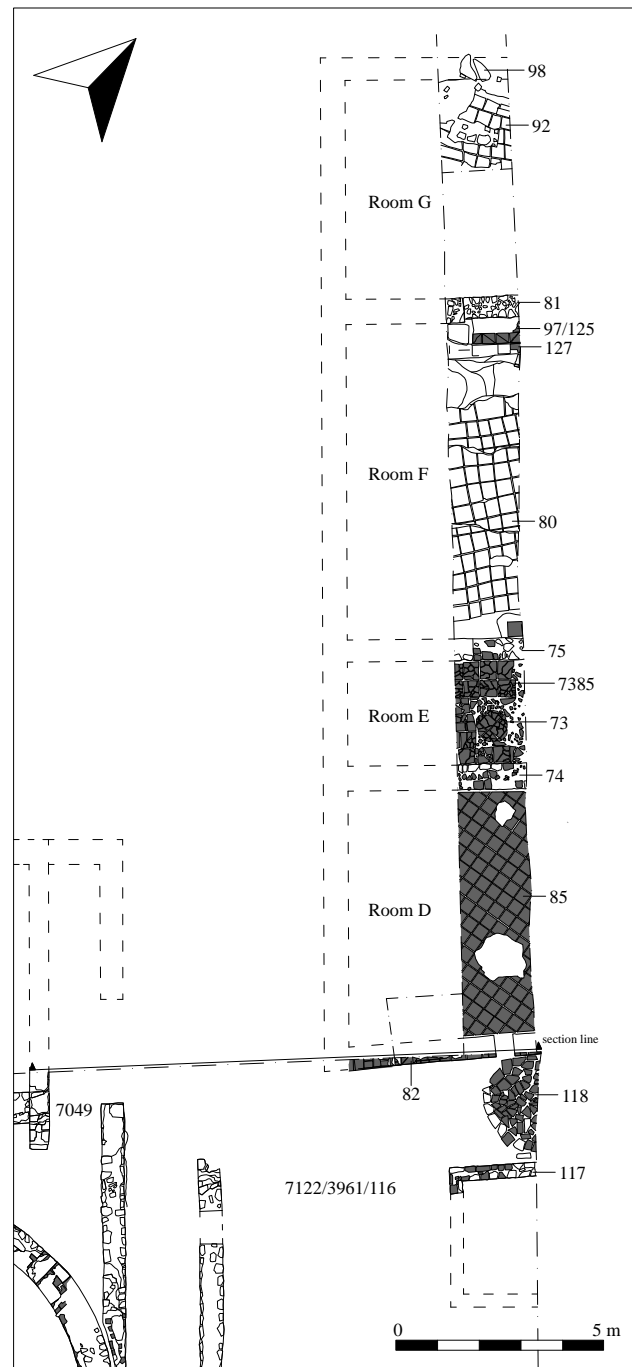


Figure 4.97. The eastern bath-house

The octagonal room

The western bath-house, and along with it the layout of the northwestern corner of the house, may also have been altered at this time following the construction of a large octagonal structure (Fig. 4.103). This new building was constructed over the western room of the complex located to the north of the marine entrance and partially over the northern corridor surrounding the western entrance (Fig. 4.104). To accommodate its construction the western end of the southern wall of this earlier complex (7386), along with wall 7378, were demolished.

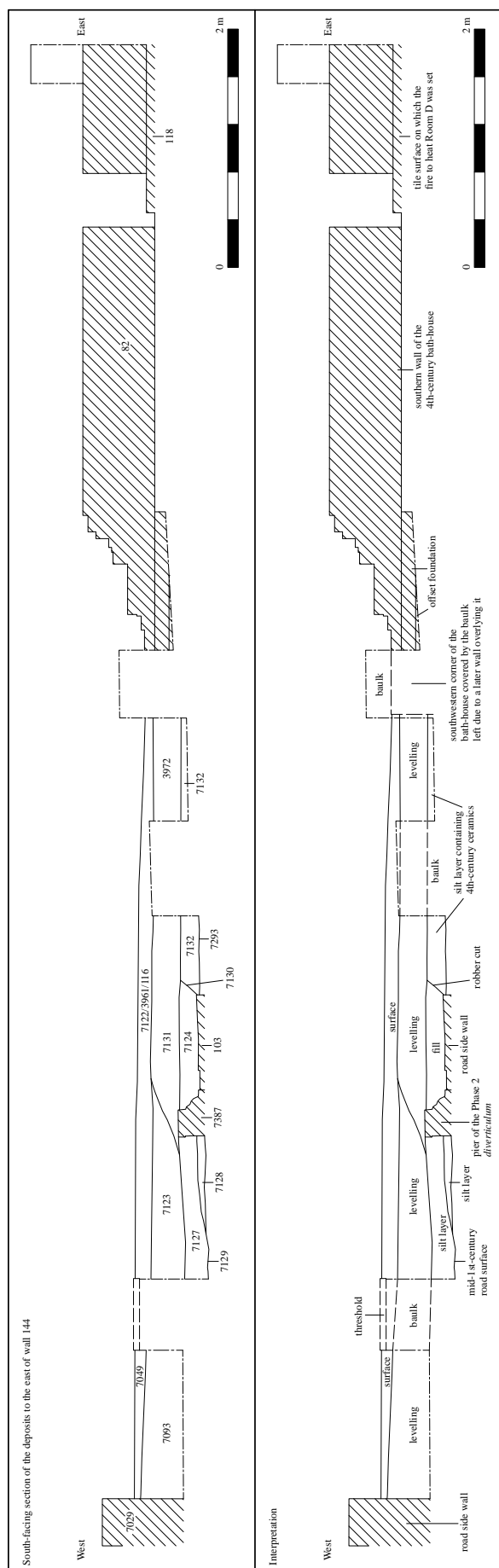


Figure 4.98. South-facing section of the deposits used to raise the area around the southern side of the Phase 3b eastern bath-house. See Fig. 4.97 for location



Figure 4.99. The tile sub-floor 85 in Room D of the Phase 3b eastern bath-house, looking south. The blocked-in praefurnium can be seen at the far end of the room incorporated into wall 82 (1 m scale)



Figure 4.100. The semicircular paving 118 fronting the praefurnium of Room D. Wall 117 can be seen behind the paving

The walls of the new octagonal room (7149) were 0.46 m wide and were constructed with bands of brick, 0.26 m in length and 40 mm thick, separated by thick layers of yellowish-white mortar set over a foundation of limestone blocks 0.66 m wide. The southern side of the room abutted the northern wall of the marine entrance. Due to the pre-existing drain (7151) running along the edge of this wall, a new vaulted capping (7204), 0.80 m wide, was constructed over the drain (Fig. 4.105).



Figure 4.101. The suspended floor 73 in Room E of the Phase 3b eastern bath-house (1.60 m scale)



Figure 4.102. Room F showing the mortar bedding (80) collapsed into a series of underlying linear features (1 m scale)



Figure 4.103. The Phase 3b octagonal tower built to the south of the western bath-house, looking east (2 m scale)

Constructed with 13 lines of brick laid on end, similar in size to those of wall 7149, this new capping would have been necessary in order to distribute the weight of the wall constructed over it.⁴¹ To the north the eastern side abutted wall 7290, which was reused to form the northern wall of the room (Fig. 4.106).

Internally the room measures 6.12 m north–south by c. 6.50 m east–west. Although badly damaged, part of a geometric mosaic (7152) set over a pinkish-grey mortar was found along the eastern side of the room, the design following the shape of the room (see Fig. 4.105; see also Plate 10.8) (for the full description of this mosaic see Chapter 10). Around the sides of the room tiles were used to form an edging between the mosaic and the walls. Fragments of wall plaster were found on the internal faces of the walls. A cut (7410) in the centre of the room may suggest there had originally been a pool or fountain in this position.

The room was accessed by a door in the southeast side of

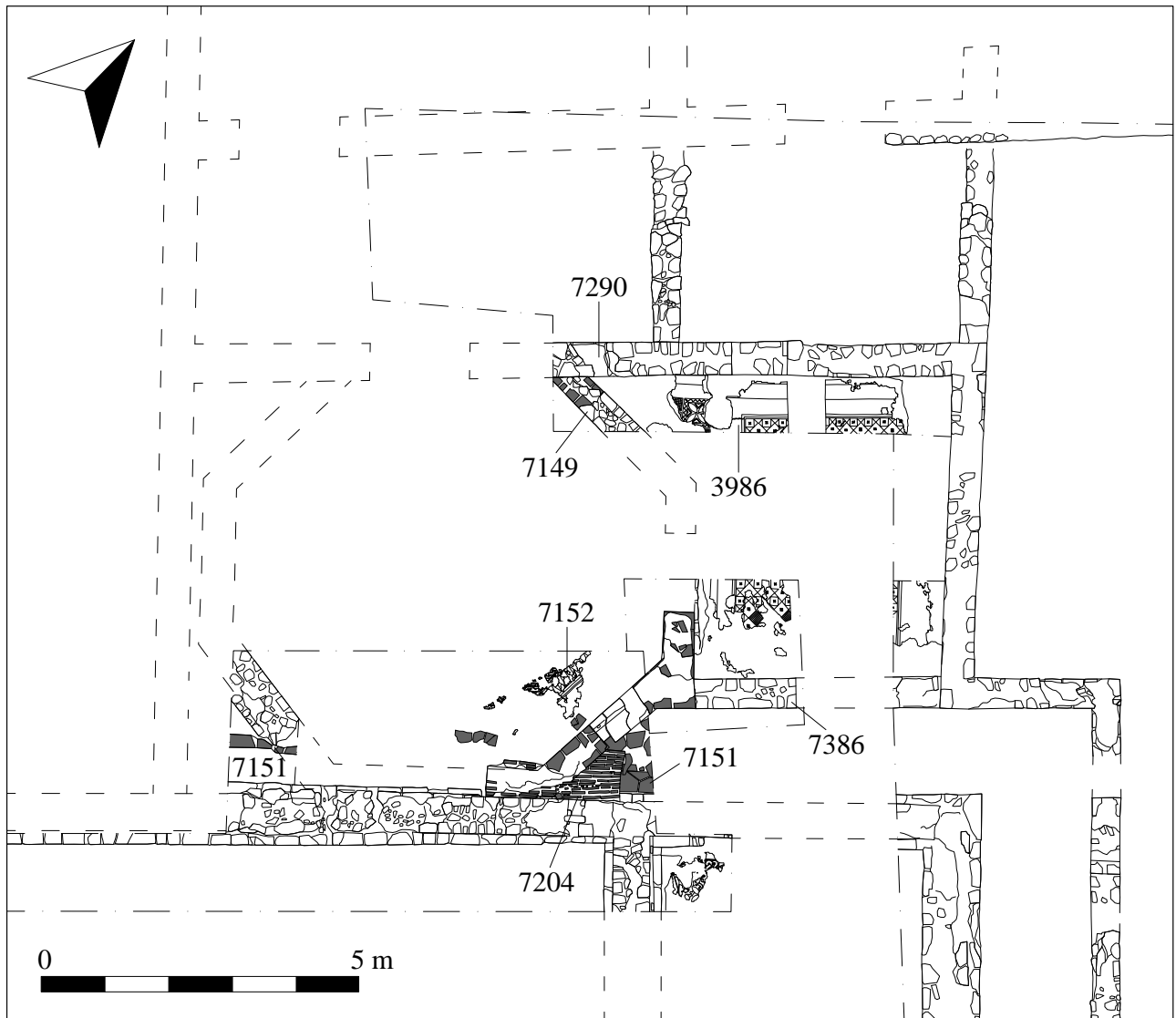


Figure 4.104. Plan of the octagonal tower



Figure 4.105. View of the capping 7204 built over drain 7151. The wall of the octagonal tower was then constructed over the capping (50 cm scale)

the room which opened onto the corridor running around the marine entrance. Part of the threshold of this door remained *in situ*, with the sill of the door positioned along the western edge of the threshold indicating that the door opened into the corridor (see Fig. 4.105). To the north of the corridor, the east room of the earlier Phase 3a complex was retained, as the western end of the southern wall of the room (7386) was incorporated into the eastern corner of the octagonal room. With the wall of the octagonal room forming the western limit, this room's width varied from 5.67 m along its northern side to 3.88 m along its southern side. Despite this, a geometric mosaic (3986) was laid within the room, the design of which was carefully made to fit the room's awkward shape (Fig. 4.107; see also Plate 10.9) (for the full description of this mosaic see Chapter 10). A door incorporated into the eastern wall of the octagonal building allowed access between these two rooms.

The proximity of the octagonal room and the bath-house suggests the two may have been connected. Similar

rooms are known from a number of coastal villa sites along the Epirote coast, for example at Diaporit, Frangoklisia/Riza, Strongyli and Phoenixe.⁴² When connected with bath-houses these buildings, which vary from hexagonal, octagonal or decagonal in shape, have been identified as



Figure 4.106. Detail of the octagonal tower abutting the southern side of the Phase 3b wall 7290 (1 m scale)

frigidarii and were often the most elaborately decorated spaces in the baths. Some appear to have been almost tower-like constructions. Assuming the octagonal room of the Vrina domus was a tower, it would have been a prominent marker on the Vrina Plain. Clearly visible from the city of Butrint as well as to anyone sailing up the Vivari Channel, it would have highlighted not only the presence but also the ambitions of the house owner.

The east wing

The alterations to this part of the house appear to have been restricted to the store room where the fuel for the *prae-furnium* was kept (Fig. 4.108). A hole was smashed through the southern end of the room's eastern wall (147) to create a new doorway. Either side of this gap two east-west-aligned walls were constructed (122 and 146), the western end of the north wall 122 having been built partially over the northern edge of the newly created doorway. The new door seems to have led into a corridor (c. 1.10 m wide), with a second room to the north of this that again may have been used for storage.⁴³

Summary/Interpretation

In time a number of alterations were made to the house (Fig. 4.109). These included a large enclosure wall built around the apse of the hall. Running parallel with the outer wall of the cistern to the east, this created an alleyway between the two. A doorway at the northern end of the new wall led to a space from which the rooms along the northern side of the apsidal hall could be accessed. The northern end of the earlier eastern wall, which had defined the road leading to the Vivari Channel, was demolished. The area was then levelled over before a new building, possibly a bath-house, was constructed in the northeast corner of the area.

The layout of the earlier bath-house to the northwest of the apsidal hall also seems to have changed during this period. A large octagonal structure was built over the



Figure 4.107. Detail of mosaic 3986 showing how it was laid to follow the awkward shape of the room following the construction of the octagonal tower

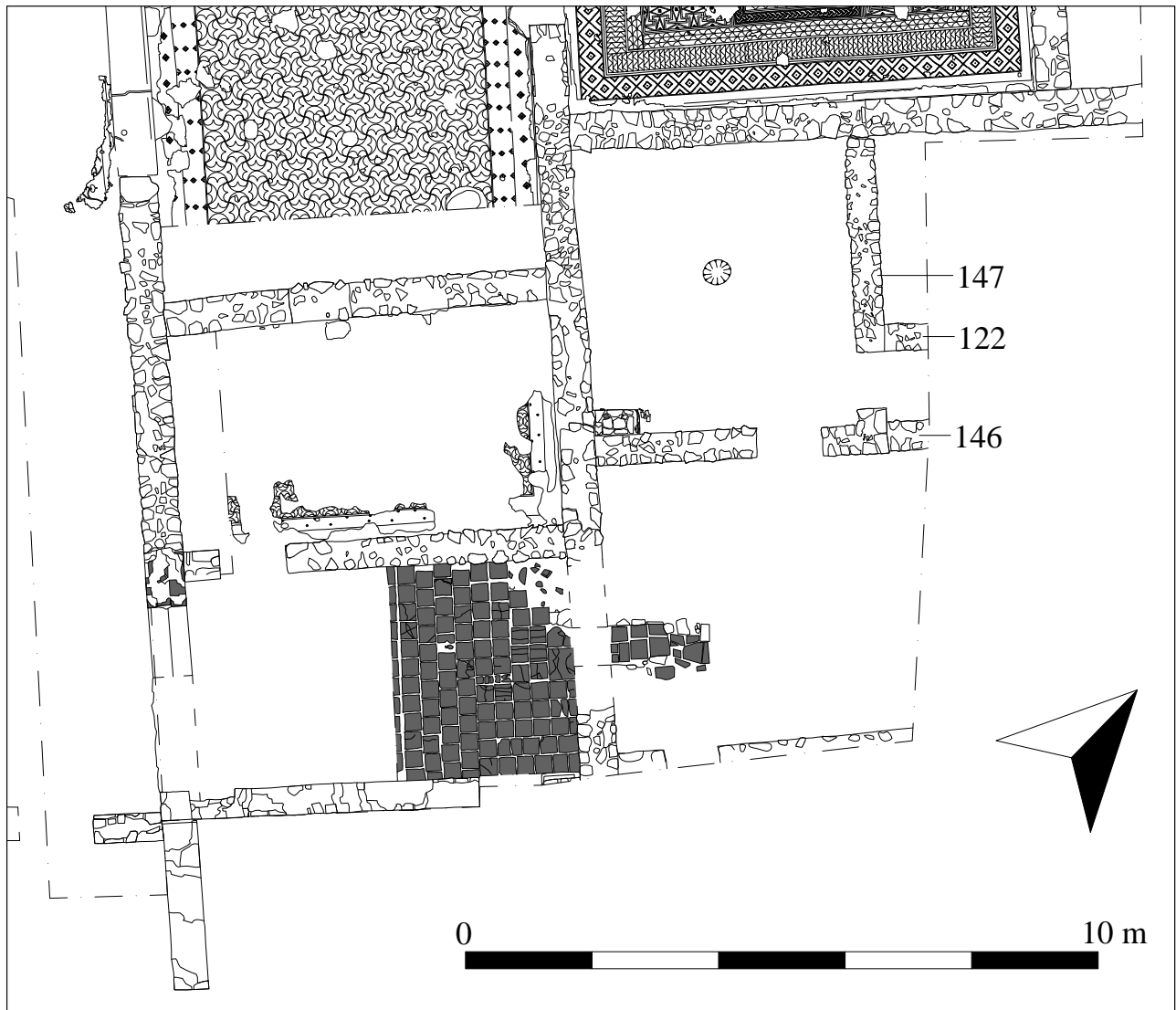


Figure 4.108. Plan of the Phase 3b alterations made to the storeroom in Room 7 of the east wing of the domus

western changing room, and a new mosaic was laid in the room to the side.

To the east, the storerooms in the open area to the east of the *prae-furnium* of Room 4 were altered too.

Notes

- 1 The stone from this robbing activity was presumably salvaged to be re-used in the new building. In the case of Building 1, along with removing the main up-standing walls of the building, the robbing activity at the northern end of wall 7174 was much deeper as indicated by cut 7173. The aim of this robbing appears to have been to remove the large facing stones along the northern edge of the wall, as the rubble footings were untouched. Not all of the blocks were removed, as three were found *in situ* at the western end, the western block partially underlying the apse of the Phase 7 basilica. Infilling the cut was a light to mid-grey silty-sand (7172) producing pottery dated to the 2nd to 3rd century AD. Associated with this robbing activity was layer 7169. Situated to the north of wall 7174 and overlying layer 7170 (see Chapter 3), 7169 was a mid- to light brownish-grey mixed clayey-sand and crushed shell deposit (c. 20:80% ratio) covering an area roughly 0.90m north-south by 0.85m east-west. The deposit, which is c. 90 mm thick, contained a large amount of tile within it and as such is thought to be a dump of material that was not needed following the dismantling of wall 7174, the tile having originally been used in the build of the wall.
- 2 The eastern end of the north stylobate (wall 7374) was also built against this wall.
- 3 The northeastern corner of the pool had been built over by the apse of the later Phase 7 basilica. However, the corner and part of the associated floor of the inner pool could be seen at the base of a robber cut (3265), which had been cut through the floor of the apse of the basilica.
- 4 It is unclear whether a second outlet drained the eastern outer pool as the corners of this pool were not revealed. Possibly the pipes in the eastern apses of the inner pool

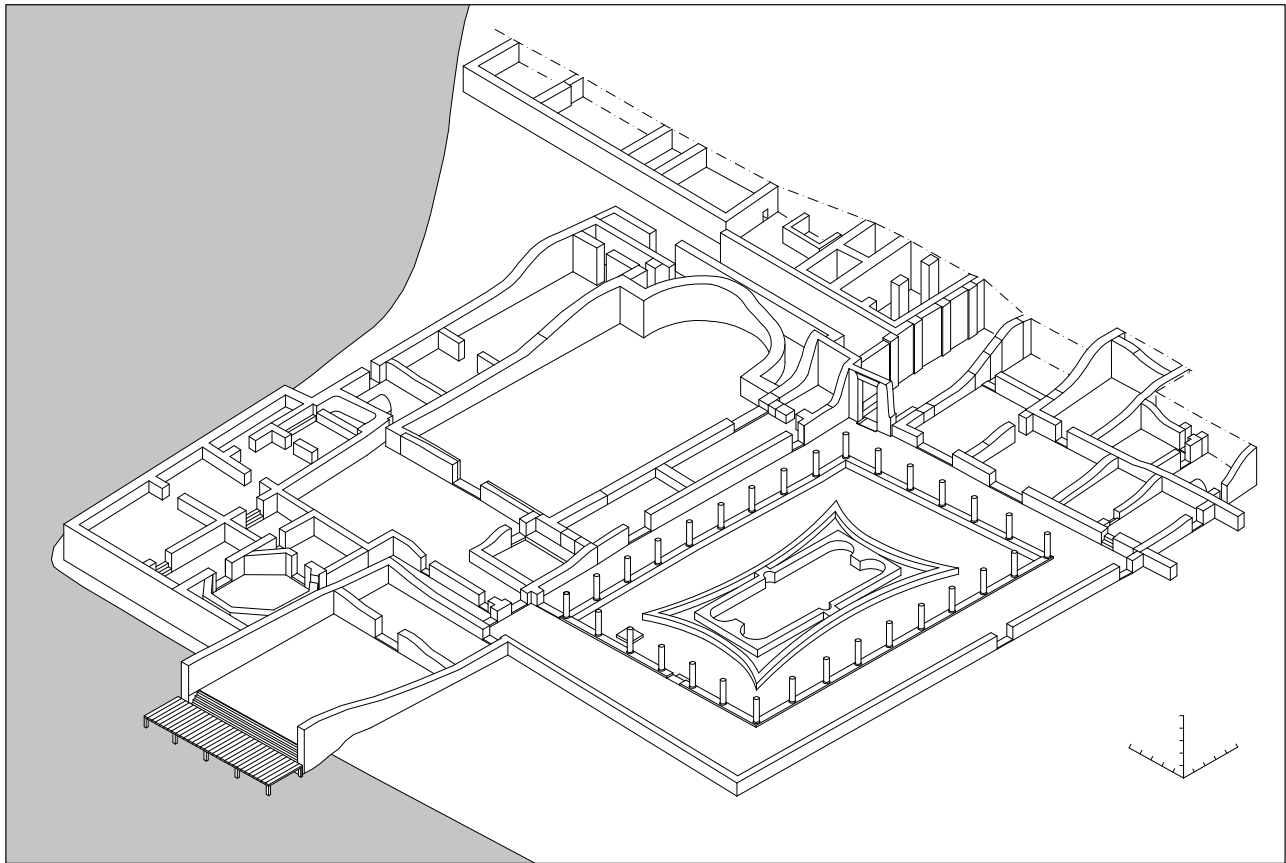


Figure 4.109. Axonometric reconstruction of the domus in Phase 3b

were sufficient to keep the water moving so that it did not stagnate.

- 5 The construction of the outlet drain 7161/7229 and the subsequent infilling of this area is thought to have caused much of the damage to the underlying mortar surface 7102.
- 6 Layer 7168 also contained a noticeable amount of intrusive late 4th- to 6th-century material pressed into it (see Volume 6.3, Chapter 3).
- 7 These southern rooms can be seen on the geophysics plot of the site fronting the second courtyard (see Fig. 4.85). Part of one of these rooms was revealed at the southern end of a trench dug across the south portico, the eastern part of which went through a doorway in wall 7906. Covering the floor of the southern room was a mortar floor (7907) that is thought to have been the foundation for a finer floor subsequently removed. Due to the depth of the section, which was 1.30m high, only 0.80m of the floor was exposed.
- 8 Evidence of a further tile-built column was found at the northern end of the eastern stylobate. Again only the lowest course of the column survived as the eastern wall of the Phase 7 basilica (3299) had been built over it (see Fig. 6.14).
- 9 The continuation of this deposit was also located towards the eastern end of the portico where excavations beneath the eastern aisle of the later Phase 7 basilica revealed a compact make-up layer of light olive-green clay silt (7196). This layer had been laid against the threshold stone 7350, sealing the earlier threshold that had formed the main entrance to Building 2.
- 10 Amongst the pottery recovered from layer 3369 was a

possible rim fragment of a 6th-century Cretan amphora. This must be intrusive and probably got mixed into the deposit at the time the portico was altered following the construction of the basilica in the 6th century (see Chapter 6). The mixing of the upper part of layer 3369 must also explain how a coin dated c. AD 330–428 (SF 6067/Cat. 373) was found in this layer too. It should also be noted that three other late 4th- to early 5th-century coins (SF 6070/Cat. 148, SF 6344/Cat. 392 and SF 6343/250), along with a *sestertius* of Trajan (AD 103–17) (SF 6383/Cat. 38), recorded from having been found in layer 3369/7061 should, based on the levels taken on these finds, actually be from the overlying deposits 3360/7060.

- 11 Along with a mix of 2nd-century ceramics, layer 1075 also contained some large pieces from various 3rd-century AD vessels. Of these later pieces, a number of sherds of similar vessels were also found in a major mid-3rd-century assemblage in the Forum 1 excavations, context 98. This may, as Paul Reynolds notes, suggest these two building sequences in the forum and the Vrina Plain were contemporary. See Volume 6.3.
- 12 The northern side wall of the door (7041) had been built onto this foundation and it must be assumed that the southern side wall of the door (7042) would also have utilised this foundation.
- 13 A transect of three cores taken at 1 m, 1.50 m and 2 m intervals (Cores 1–3) from the western limit of the trench edge identified the line of the foundation 7150 in the first two cores but not the third. As well as indicating the foundation

- 7150, the third core also gave some idea of the profile of the underlying gravel formation. A layer of organic mud recorded overlying the gravel within the core section is likely to be linked to the wider horizon of marshy deposits dated to the late 13th-century (pers. comm., D. Bescoby). (See also Chapter 7.)
- 14 Pers. comm., D. Bescoby.
 - 15 The construction of this building along the channel edge also explains the need for the building's wide and well-built deep foundations, to provide support on what would have been very soft and unstable underlying sediments.
 - 16 Tiles with similar hand-swipes have been found in the construction of a number of buildings at Butrint, for example room 24 at the Triconch Palace (Bowden, Francis *et al.* 2011, 16–19, 20–2).
 - 17 The addition of an apse to create a more formalised space can also be seen in the Triconch *domus* where the reception room at the western end of the southern gallery was aggrandised with the addition of an apse (Bowden, Francis *et al.* 2011, 20–2; Bowden 2011a, 281–3).
 - 18 The possible identification of this apsidal building as a private audience chamber is important as similar structures have been found at a number of late Roman provincial houses, for example at the 'palace' above the theatre at Ephesus in Turkey, the 'palace' of the governor or bishop at Aphrodisias in Asia Minor and the 'Palace of the Dux' at Apollonia in Libya; for a discussion of these buildings see Ellis 1985, 15–25. These 4th-century AD houses, as Ellis (1991, 120) notes, appear to have been the largest and richest in each town or district and although they are referred to as 'palaces' due to their exceptional size, which he points out is difficult to verify, he does suggest that they would almost certainly have been owned by a high-ranking provincial aristocrat. As with the structure from the Vrina Plain, these large single-apsed structures were located near to an entrance way and were entered via a set route that stopped the visitor from entering the entire house, ensuring a degree of separation between the owners' private and public life as well as that of his household. Ellis (1991, 122–3) suggests these structures were needed as the late Roman aristocrat increasingly had to differentiate between the various social classes of guests that arrived at his house. The house of the late Roman period appears to have had a 'strong hierarchy of access' in which reception facilities played a strong part in the manipulation of social encounters as well as social relations (*ibid.*). In the early Roman period the *triclinium*, the main large central room of the house, might have been both dining hall and audience chamber. However, in the later house guests were received in more specialised rooms in which 'the audience hall was provided to overawe lowly clients, the formal dining room for important individuals and the main *triclinium* for more intimate friends' (Ellis 1988, 572).
 - 19 Wk-25585. The Carbon 14 dating was undertaken by the Radiocarbon Dating Laboratory of the University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand.
 - 20 These deposits were excavated over a number of seasons: 1059 was excavated in 2002 as part of the initial trial excavations along the drainage ditch and was found to seal the offset of the northern bath-house; 2130 was excavated in 2004 as part of Area L directly in front of the doorway into the apsidal hall; 3937 was excavated in 2006 when a slot was dug along the southern side of wall 2111 and is the same as 7225, the number given to this deposit in 2007 when the slot was widened; 3945 was found to the south of the later wall 2112, which was built over 3945 and 2130, with the latter (2130) located to the north of it.
 - 21 Layer 3945 also contained a rim fragment of a 4th-century AD ARS 50A vessel along with a coin dating to AD 395–401 (SF6254/Cat. 237). These intrusive pieces probably came from the overlying layer 3910.
 - 22 A number of these dislodged *tesserae* were found in the overlying deposit 3337.
 - 23 Contexts 7258, 7259, 7260, 7263, 7264, 7265, 7266, 7267, 7270 and 7271. The necks and handles of further amphorae could be seen beneath 7115 to the south where the overlying floor had worn away slightly. As the excavated area is only a quarter of the entire room and the amphorae revealed were in a very small part of this, the total number of amphorae within the room could exceed 30.
 - 24 This is suggested as a number of *tesserae* were found in the later deposits infilling the room.
 - 25 As noted in Chapter 3, there is the possibility a door may have been located here connecting the Phase 1 Rooms 3 and 7. The northern end of wall 3465 ends in a vertical face and as only a single width of tile was used against this wall face it is possible the new construction utilised the pre-existing gap, the only change required being the narrowing of the southern side of the former doorway.
 - 26 The possibility of clay infills is suggested as the floor was later truncated by a series of post-holes. The base of the cuts continued below the mortar floor foundation and a compact layer of green clay was visible in the sides of all the cuts.
 - 27 Bescoby 2007, 115.
 - 28 Carucci 2007, 8–9; Özgenel 2007, 265–9; Scott 2000, 108.
 - 29 For a discussion of the orientation of villas and the positioning of reception/audience chambers see Mulvin 2002.
 - 30 Ellis 2000, 160–3.
 - 31 See Bescoby 2007, 115–16 for a discussion of these geophysical anomalies.
 - 32 This figure is only a rough estimate based on the suggestion that the structure covers *c.* 150 m north to south by 76 m east to west. The true southern extent of the structure remains uncertain; the magnetic responses are not clear and further excavation is required to define it properly.
 - 33 This is based on the *domus* covering an area roughly 34.75 m north to south by 39.47 m east to west.
 - 34 See Kyrkou 2006.
 - 35 Recent excavations in the forum would seem to indicate that during the mid-3rd century AD the plan of the forum was altered. Some of the buildings that surrounded it were demolished, and statuary which may have once been displayed appears to have been destroyed and discarded to create levelling for new buildings that partially encroached on to the forum (Hernandez and Çondi 2008, 288–9; Hansen 2009, 79). The buildings excavated on the southern edge of the acropolis also seem to have been abandoned at this time (*cf.* Greenslade, Leppard and Logue 2013, 55).
 - 36 Bowden 2003, 37–58.
 - 37 Ellis 1988; 1991; 2000; 2004. The luxurious *villa maritima* at Diaporit located on the eastern shore of Lake Butrint appears to have been abandoned at this time, possibly as a direct result of the emergence of a new urban élite at Butrint.
 - 38 Two similar clay silt deposits (7186 and 7185) containing 1st- to 3rd-century ceramics were found underlying the

southern end of the wall. Again these deposits sealed the earlier surface of the road that had led to the Vivari Channel.

39 The room numbers for the bath-house and cistern will follow those used by Crowson and Gilkes 2007, 144, 144–7.

40 Over time a soft grey silt (layer 126) infilled the drain.

41 Only the eastern end of the vaulting survived for *c.* 2.20 m

as the western extent of it had been removed, probably as part of the robbing event which removed the walls of the western half of the room.

42 Bowden 2003, 60–7; Katsadima and Angeli 2001, 93–4.

43 Only the tops of these walls were exposed as they were located virtually against the eastern limit of the excavations.

5 Late 4th to late 5th century AD – The decline and reuse of the *domus*

Simon Greenslade

Introduction

This chapter describes the archaeological and structural evidence from Phases 4 to 6 dating to the late 4th to late 5th century AD. The *domus* was temporarily abandoned towards the end of the 4th century, before being reoccupied at the beginning of the 5th century, and then subsequently abandoned once more during the middle decades of the 5th century.

Phase 4: late 4th century – abandonment

In the late 4th century the *domus* was temporarily abandoned as the building appears to have suffered significant structural damage; a number of walls, including the apse of the apsidal hall, collapsed. The reason for this damage is unclear although it is possible that it may have been as a result of an earthquake.¹ Despite this, there does seem to have been some activity on site as a very unusual burial was found to the west of the apsidal hall (Fig. 5.1).

The double burial

The grave (2151) was oval-shaped (1.75 m long by 1 m wide) and just over 0.70 m deep, the base having been cut through layer 2142, the Phase 1 rough floor surface associated with Building 3. Within the grave were the remains of two adult males (2148 and 2149) who appear

to have been interred together (Fig. 5.2). The bodies had been laid out roughly north–south with the heads to the south (Fig. 5.3). The older of the two (2148), who was thought to be in his late 40s at the time of death, had been placed in a supine position along the western side of the grave. His left arm had been bent over his chest and his right arm placed over his pelvis. A bronze seal ring (SF 2998) with a stylised depiction of a leaping horse was found on the index finger of his right hand (Fig. 5.4). At his waist was a small lead-like object (SF 2884). The younger individual (2149), who was in his mid-30s, was in a prone position. He had been placed along the eastern side of the grave, with his arms bent in front of him and his hands under his head. His spine was slightly twisted and his knees were bent. The positioning of his hands and legs suggest he had been bound. At the base of his spine a small iron object was noticed; this object could have contributed to his death. A fragment of a jet ring (SF 2883) was found by his right knee (see Fig. 5.4). From the positioning of the bodies, the right hip of 2148 partially overlying that of 2149, it would seem that the younger male (2149) had been interred first. The bodies had been covered by a series of large (0.60 × 0.30 m) roof tiles (2150) which may have fallen from the surrounding buildings (Fig. 5.5). The tiles were overlapped and had been deliberately placed over the head, torso and pelvis of both individuals.²

Table 5.1. Overview of the development of the Vrina Plain settlement: Phases 4–6

<i>Phase</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Summary</i>
4	Late 4th century	Villa abandoned as result of earthquake Unusual double burial interred within courtyard fronting western entrance of apsidal hall
5	Early 5th century	Site reoccupied: apse of apsidal hall repaired and two buttress walls built either side of apse to support new build. Southern courtyard partially levelled over leaving only inner pool of central feature in use. Eastern cistern altered
6	Mid–late 5th century	Abandonment possibly due to environmental changes; rising water table. Collapse of Xarra–Butrint aqueduct and lack of constant supply of fresh water may also have impacted upon use of villa

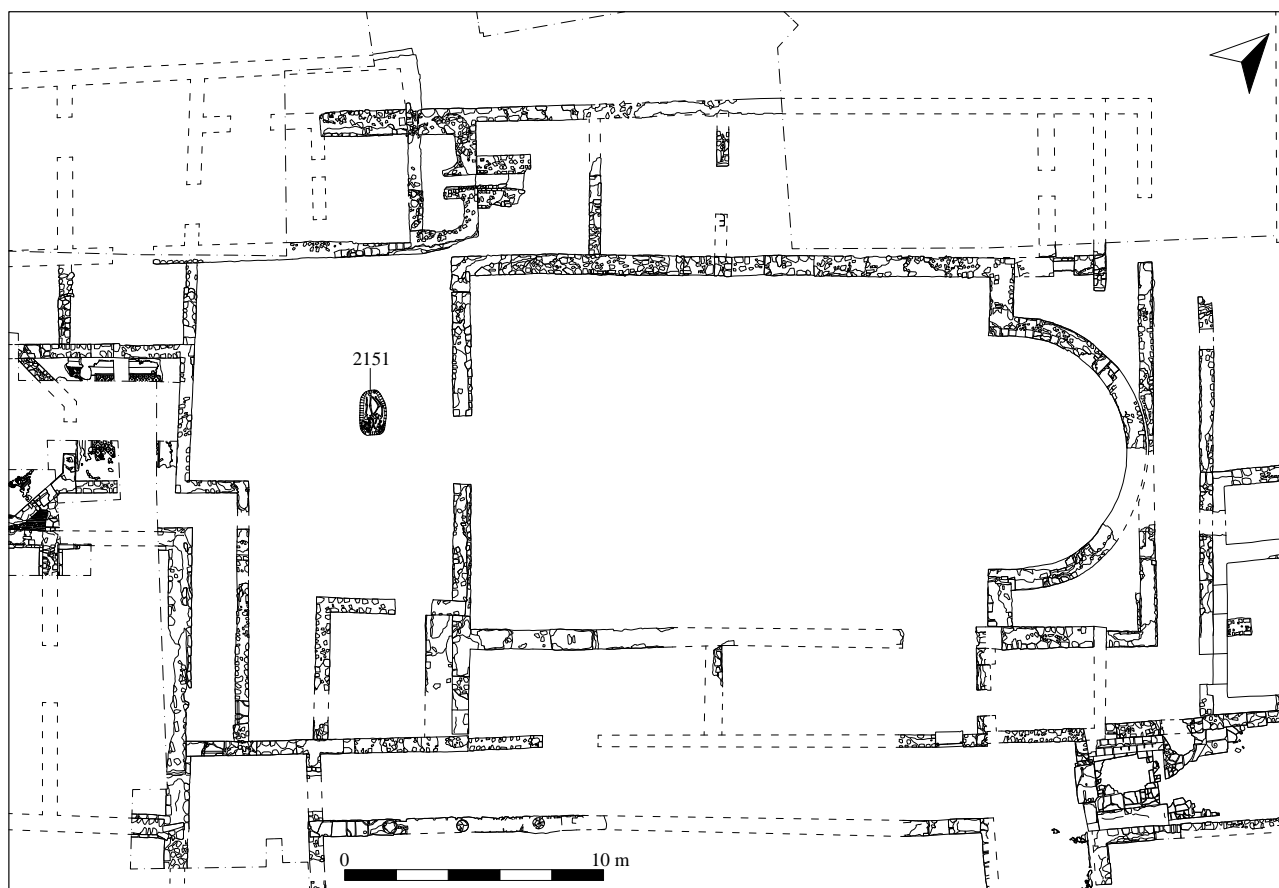


Figure 5.1. The Vrina Plain settlement showing areas of activity in Phase 4 (late 4th century)

AMS radiocarbon dating carried out on the younger individual produced a calibrated date of AD 230–410 (1720 \pm 40 BP).³ The date range corroborates the mid-4th-century date of the glass and ceramics recovered from the backfill of the grave (2147).⁴ At the time of the excavation the level from which the grave was cut was missed as the colour and compaction of the deposits infilling the general area were very similar. However, a pot join of an ARS 197 amphora between context 2147 and 2122, along with a further join of a horned-handle DR 2-4 amphora between 2147 and two joining pieces from 2122 and 2130 would seem to indicate that the grave was cut from the level of 2122.⁵

Studies of the pathology of the individuals indicate that the older individual had suffered extensive osteoarthritis and had a compression fracture to his tibia which had subsequently healed.⁶ This kind of fracture is most commonly associated with forces acting on the knee such as running or jumping. It can either be acute, occurring from a specific injury, or it can build-up over time from repeated movements that eventually cause a stress fracture. This robust male also had distinct bone growth on both upper arms. These muscle markers associated with the bicep muscles are indicative of habitual flexion of these muscles, possibly through lifting, carrying or flexing of the arm. The younger individual also suffered from arthritis, as well as a dental abscess.

Summary/Interpretation

The 4th-century Greek teacher Libanius described an earthquake that devastated Greece during the reign of Julian (AD 361–63), while the 12th-century Byzantine historian Cedrenus claimed in his *A Concise History of the World* that a ‘sea wave’ devastated Epirus during the reign of Galatian (AD 375–82). Other sources also refer to an earthquake causing extensive damage throughout the Balkans in AD 365.⁷ It has been hypothesized that Butrint itself may have been the epicentre of a major earthquake in AD 358, and that seismic fault damage visible on the floor of the terraced seating of the theatre indicates the destructive nature of this earthquake.⁸

A major seismic event would have brought about a dramatic tectonic shift that would have resulted in subsidence, building collapse and localised flooding. Evidence for such an event can be seen across Butrint, with one of the most dramatic being observed in the forum where excavations revealed that the pavement had slumped from north to south.⁹ This subsidence is thought to have been caused by the liquefaction of the softer sediments underlying the southern part of the forum, liquefaction being a common phenomenon on silts and sands with a high water content during earthquake shaking.¹⁰ The sudden slumping of the pavement was then followed by the immediate inundation of the area by water from the

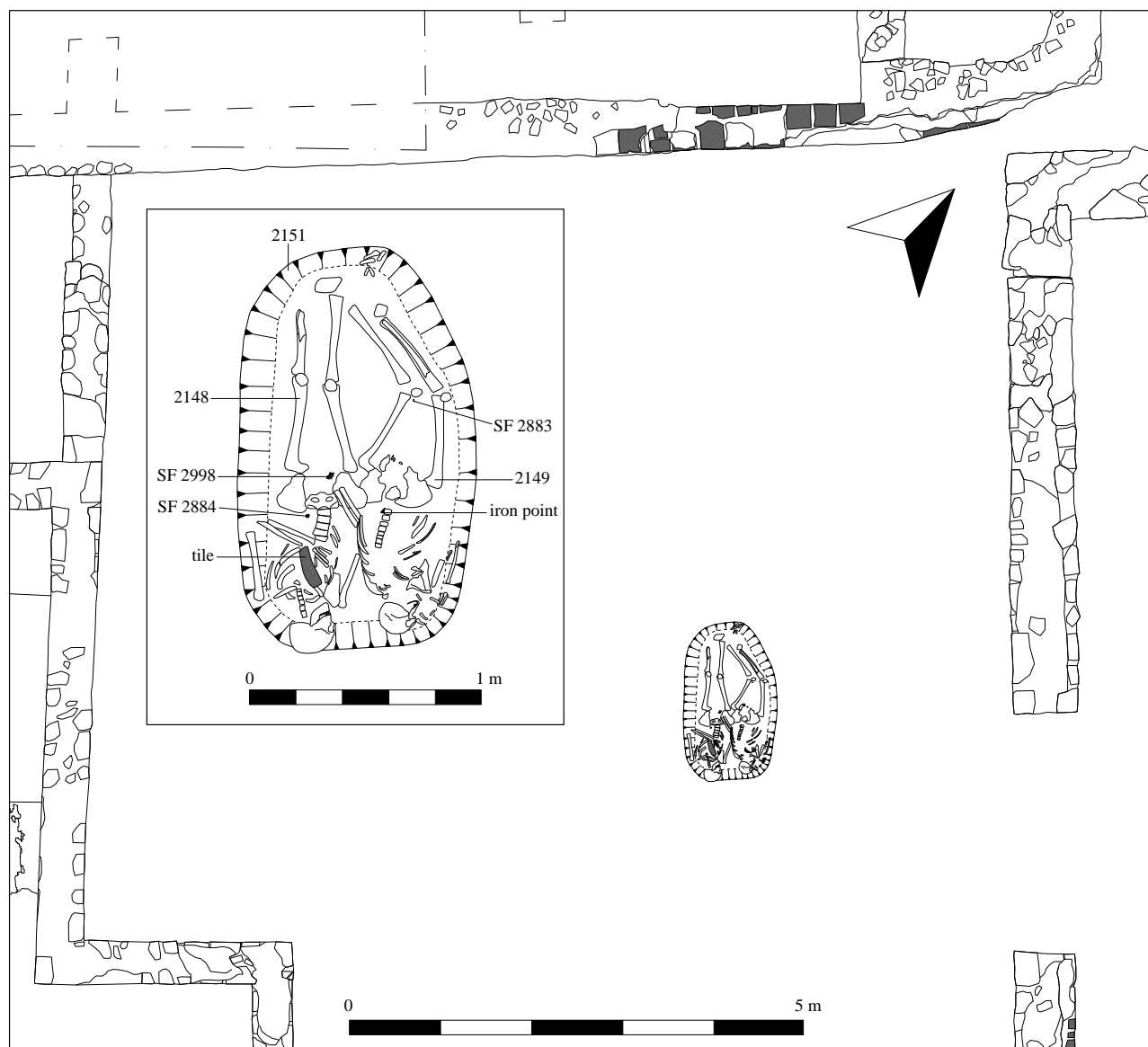


Figure 5.2. Plan of grave 2151

Vivari Channel, as indicated by the build-up of a thick layer of alluvial silts over the floor.¹¹ Sealing these was a series of destruction levels, presumably from the spoliation and demolition of the buildings surrounding the forum. These deposits, which contained ceramics dating from the mid- to late 4th century, had been deliberately dumped across the area in an attempt to raise the ground level in order to combat rising water levels.

The excavations at the Triconch Palace also appeared to indicate that in the second half of the 4th century that *domus* had been abandoned for a short time and partially collapsed.¹² When the house was reoccupied at the start of the 5th century, the focus had shifted away from the former grand rooms fronting the Vivari Channel along the southern side of the house to a new, centrally located peristyle courtyard accessed via a new western entrance. The floor levels of these new rooms were higher than those of the southern range, which the excavators suggest

now seem to have been prone to waterlogging, possibly as a result of the rising water table caused by the sudden tectonic slumping of the general area.¹³

Similar indications of a catastrophic event can also be seen along the south side of the Vivari Channel where the header tank of the aqueduct subsided. This structure had been built on a gravel bank at the edge of the Vivari Channel and the liquefaction of these underlying sediments resulted in the tilting of the cistern.¹⁴

The Vrina Plain *domus* appears to have been abandoned for a short period, probably as a result of the rising water level and possible concerns about further seismic shocks. During this period a burial containing two adult males was interred within the western courtyard fronting the main door into the apsidal hall. The bodies had been buried at the same time, with the younger individual deliberately placed face down, his hands and feet apparently bound. Roof tiles had then been placed over the upper half of

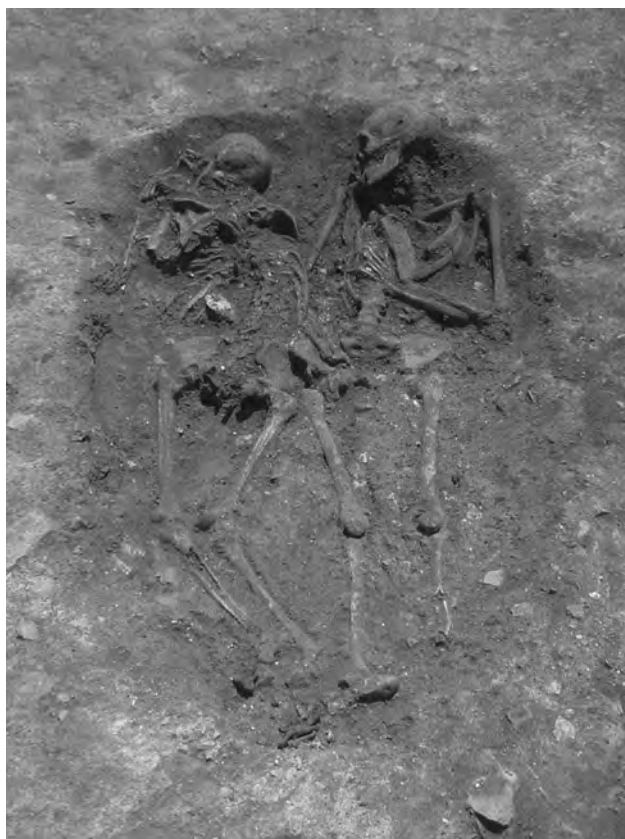


Figure 5.3. Grave 2151, looking south



Figure 5.4. Detail of the jet and bronze finger rings (SF 2883 and 2998) found in grave 2151

the individuals but not over their legs or feet. Who these individuals were is unknown and the placement of the burial within an abandoned building at a time when burials were normally placed in specific burial grounds may suggest the individuals died in suspicious circumstances.

Phase 5: early 5th century – reoccupation

The period of abandonment appears to have been short lived. By the first half of the 5th century the site was reoccupied and a number of changes were made to the surviving structures (Fig. 5.6, Plate 5.1). Some of these changes were enforced, such as repairs to a number of walls damaged in the intervening period and the raising of a



Figure 5.5. Grave capping 2150 (2 m scale)

number of floor levels along the northern side of the house that by this time would have been susceptible to the rising ground water, while others were aimed at reorganising the use of the various rooms.

The apsidal hall

Following the reoccupation of the *domus*, one of the first major repairs undertaken was the reconstruction of the dome at the eastern end of the apsidal hall, which seems to have partially collapsed. In order to do this, and possibly because it had been damaged, the builders partially dismantled wall 144 directly behind the apse (Fig. 5.7). With wall 144 partially removed a new wall (145), constructed with roughly shaped limestone blocks separated by brick/tile courses and bonded with a light-pinkish mortar containing fine gravel fragments and very small tile chippings, was built (Fig. 5.8). Incorporated into the western, internal face of this wall was the spring for the new semi-dome of the apse that was built over and partially bonded onto the wall of the earlier apse (143) (Fig. 5.9). To support and strengthen the new structure, two triangular buttresses were incorporated into the build, placed in the angles between the apse wall and the remaining western face of wall 144 (Fig. 5.10). Wall 144 remained standing to either side of the repair as both buttresses had flat eastern faces where they abutted directly against the earlier wall.

The material from the collapse of the apse that had been cleaned out prior to the repairs seems to have been partially dumped into the space to the south of the apse (Fig. 5.11). A mid-brown silty clay (7182) containing a large amount of

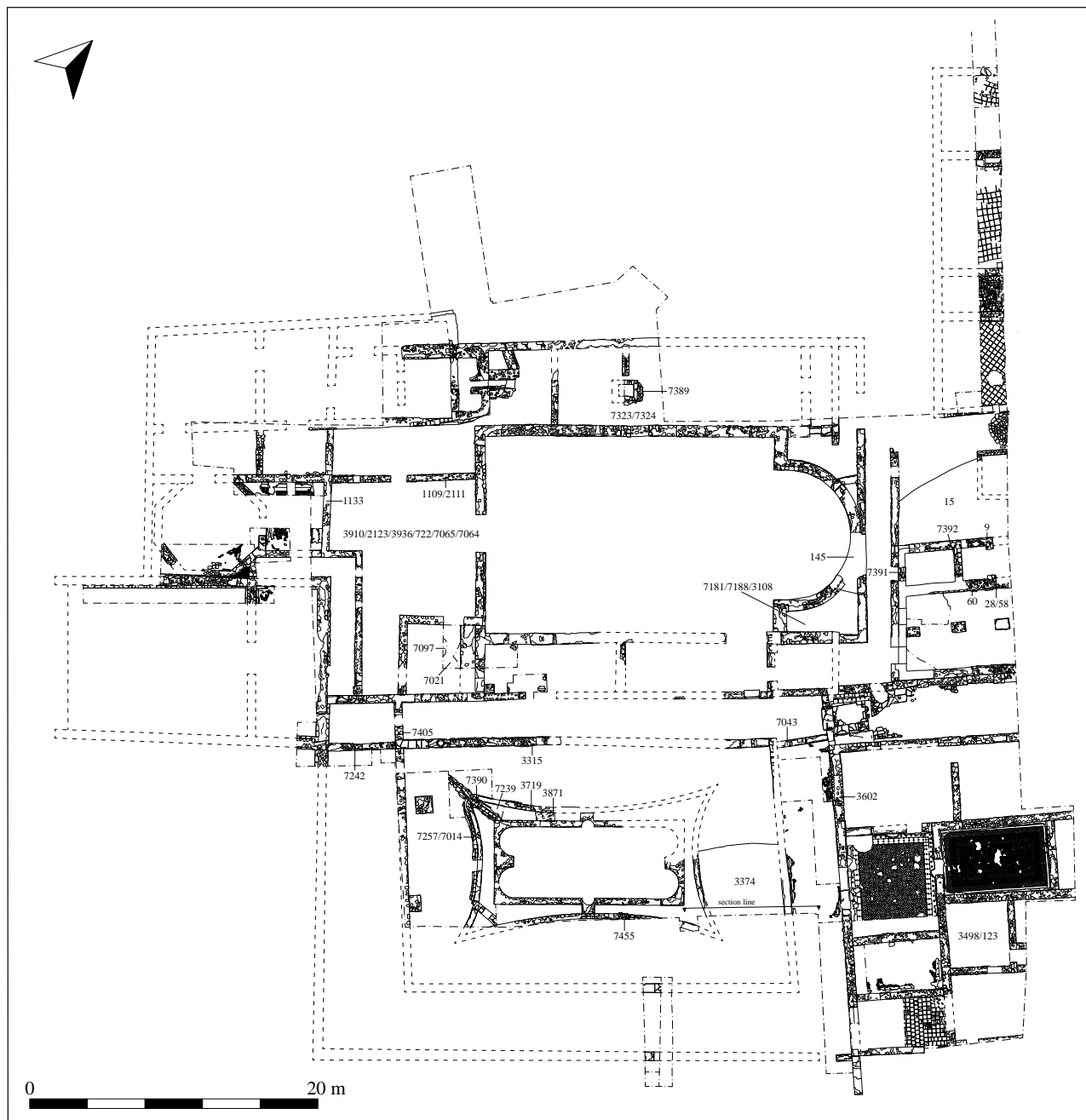


Figure 5.6. The Vrina Plain settlement showing areas of activity in Phase 5 (early 5th century)

limestone rubble and tile fragments, some of which were bonded together and matched those of the original wall of the apse, was located against the western face of wall 144. Overlying this was a light yellowish-brown sandy silt (7181/7188/3108), which was up to 0.80 m thick along its southern edge. Again, a large amount of demolition material from the collapse of the apse and surrounding walls was mixed throughout the deposit. Ceramics recovered from these layers date from the late 4th to early 5th century.¹⁵

Externally, the courtyard fronting the building's western entrance was altered by the construction of a new room along its northern side, as indicated by wall 1109/2111 (Fig. 5.12). Aligned east-west, the wall was 0.46 m wide and

was built on a slightly offset foundation that had been cut through the make-up layers of the earlier Phase 3 courtyard (1059 and 2130) (see Fig. 4.51). Built from the northeast corner of the room that fronted onto the octagonal tower, the wall extended some 10 m across the width of the earlier courtyard, the eastern end of it abutting the western face of wall 2109 (Fig. 5.13). A doorway (1.15 m wide) incorporated roughly in the centre of the wall provided a means of access to the new building, the northern side of which was formed by the southern wall of the western bath-house (1112), while the building's eastern and western walls were formed by the western wall of the apsidal hall (2109) and the eastern wall of the southern room of the

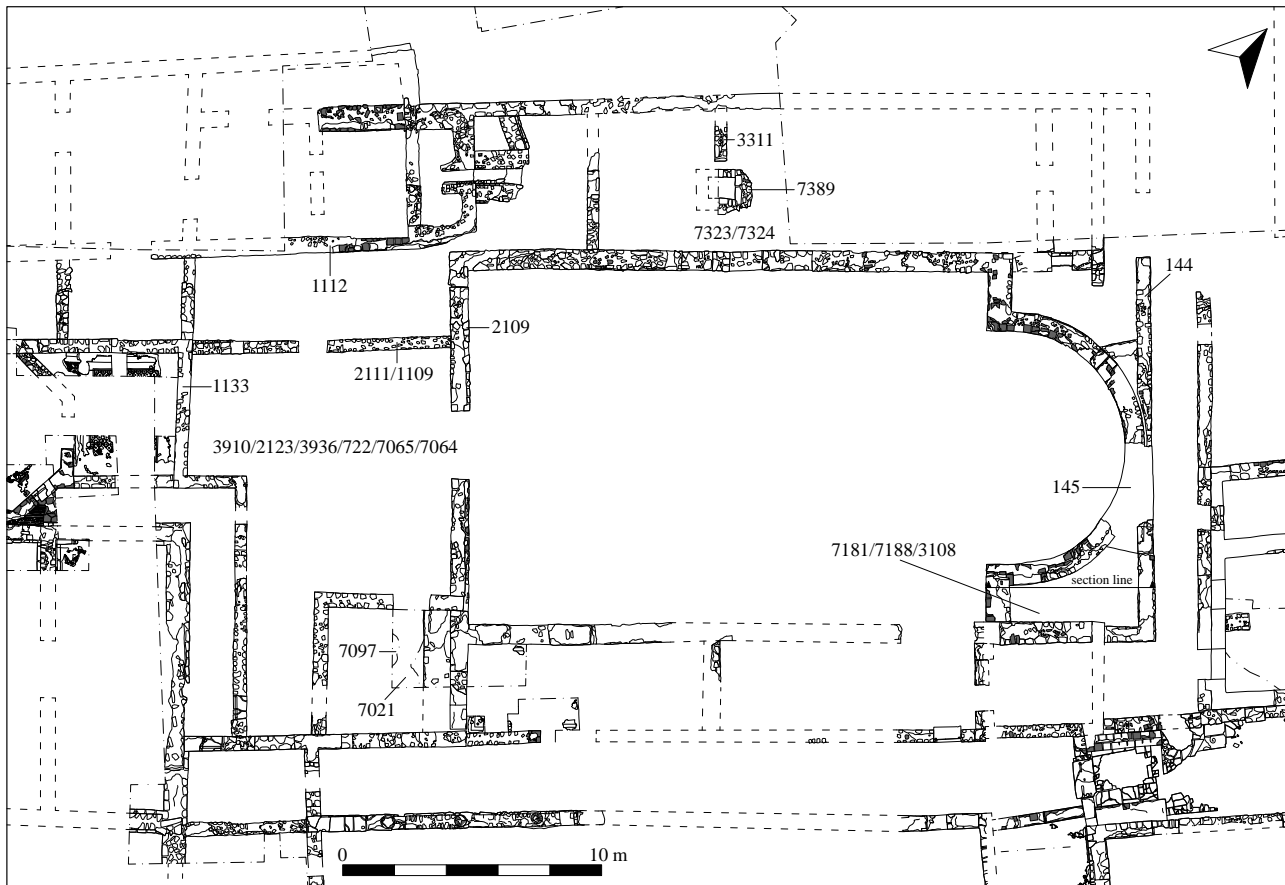


Figure 5.7. The apsidal hall and western courtyard in Phase 5



Figure 5.8. Detail of wall 145 built over Phase 3b wall 144



Figure 5.9. The western face of wall 145 showing the spring of the repaired semi-dome of the apse of the apsidal hall.



Figure 5.10. Detail of the southern buttress built to support and strengthen the repaired eastern end of the apsidal hall (1 m scale)

bath-house (1133) respectively. The internal width of the building was *c.* 3.30 m.

With wall 1109/2111 constructed, the area to the south of it was levelled over (Fig. 5.14). A dark greyish-black, compact silty clay (3910/2123/3936/7224/7065/7064), varying in thickness between 0.15–0.30 m, was spread across the area to create a new courtyard level. These deposits contained a mixed ceramic assemblage including 2nd-, 3rd- and 4th-century material, the latest dating to the late 4th/early 5th century from 7224.¹⁶ The coin finds, although limited, cover a similarly wide date range including a coin minted at Butrint dated 30–20 BC (SF 6227/Cat. 15) and one of Hadrian dated AD 125–28 (SF 6243/Cat. 41) in layer 3936, as well as coins of the late 4th/early 5th century (SF 6208/Cat. 382 and 6213/Cat. 383) and of Theodosius II (AD 425–35) (SF 6209/Cat. 268) within layer 3910.¹⁷ Layer 3910 also contained a number of fragments of glass cakes mixed within it (SF 6221 and 6224), as well as a statuette base made of obsidian (SF 6215) (see Volume 6.2, Fig. 6.53) and a copper-alloy fishing hook (SF 6244).

Along with these changes, the internal arrangement of the small room defined by walls 3978 and 3979 was altered (see Fig. 5.12). The floor (7099) and underlying levelling deposit (7120) were removed and a dark-grey sandy-silt

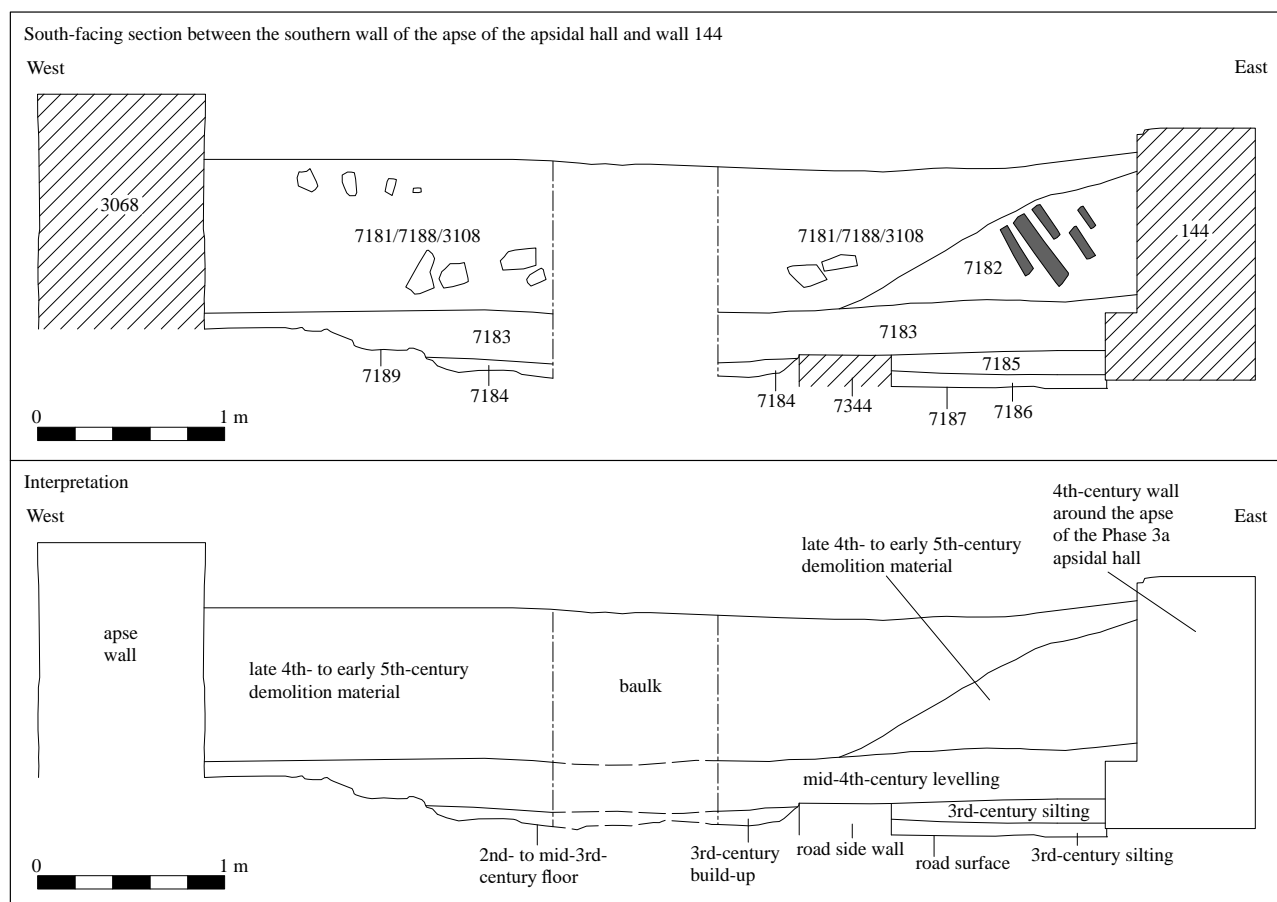


Figure 5.11. South-facing section showing the deposits infilling the space between the southern wall of the apse of the apsidal hall and wall 144. See Fig. 5.7 for location

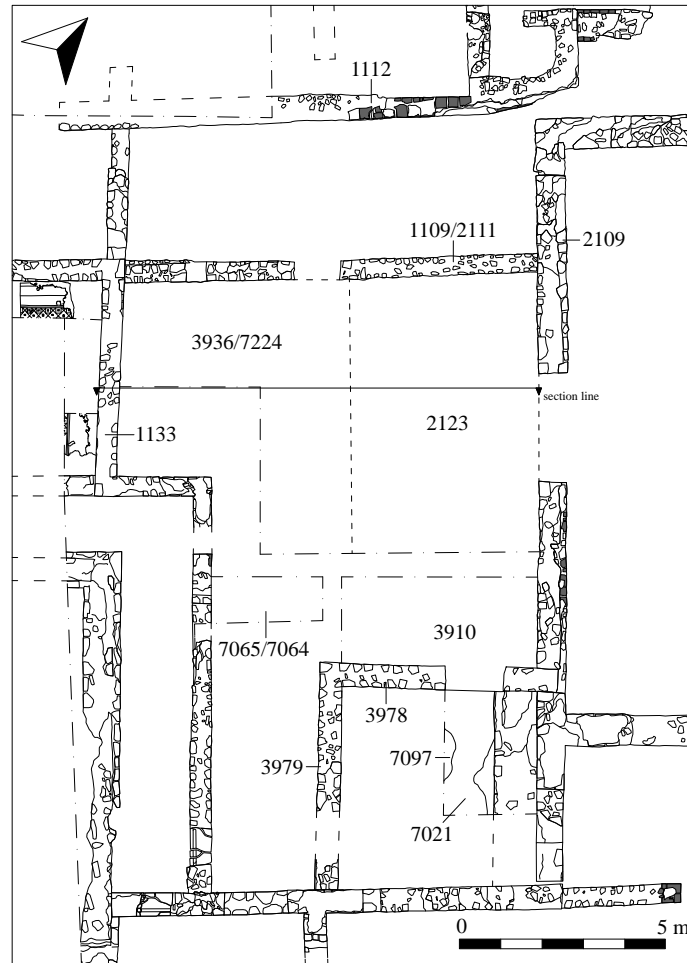


Figure 5.12. The western courtyard fronting the apsidal hall in Phase 5



Figure 5.13. View of the Phase 5 building defined by wall 1109/2111 built across the northern end of the western courtyard (1 m scale)

and ash deposit (7097) (0.27 m thick) was spread across the room. As well as limestone and tile fragments this deposit contained occupation waste including pottery and animal bone along with mussel and oyster shells mixed throughout it. A *nummi* of Theodosius I (AD 379–83) (SF 6371/Cat. 209) was found within the deposit. Overlying 7097 was 7021, a dark greyish-green clay silt (40–90 mm thick). Abundant small stones were found throughout this layer, along with tile and mortar fragments, suggesting this was possibly a rough surface. Pottery dating to the 5th century had been trampled into the surface, along with further occupation debris including animal bones and glass.¹⁸ Other finds included a lead strip (SF 6289) and a residual *sestertius* of Severus Alexander (AD 231–35) (SF 6288/Cat. 61). The eastern edge of layer 7021 abutted the western face of the bench 7023 and seems to indicate the bench remained visible (and in use) during this period.

It may have been at this time that a new structure was built within the rooms located along the northern side of the apsidal hall (see Fig. 5.7). Excavations within the eastern room revealed the eastern half of 7389, a solidly built limestone feature that had been constructed across the earlier Phase 3a doorway between walls 3311 and 7379 (Fig. 5.15). This strange positioning may have been

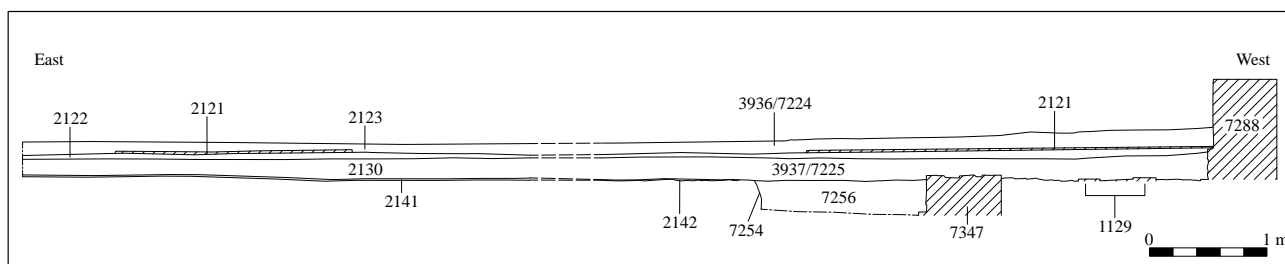


Figure 5.14. North-facing section of the courtyard fronting the western door of the apsidal hall showing the Phase 5 levelling deposit 3936/7224. See Fig. 5.12 for location



Figure 5.15. Possible water feature located along the northern side of the apsidal hall (1 m scale)

possible because wall 7379 seems to have been removed prior to the construction of 7389, while the southern end of wall 3311 was cut back slightly. Cut through deposit 7325, the northern side of 7389 had been built partially against the inner edge of the demolished Phase 1 wall 1177, while the eastern wall had been built slightly overlying the demolished Phase 1 wall 7348. The walls of 7389 were *c.* 0.40 m wide and defined a north–south space with an internal dimension of 0.85 m. Unfortunately, as the western side was not excavated, it is unclear whether 7389 was square or rectangular, which makes interpreting this feature difficult. However, the removal of wall 7379 would have opened up the room and it is possible that 7389 may have been built to act as a central feature within the new space, perhaps a water feature. Following the construction of 7389, a mid-brown silty clay (7323/7324) was spread across the southern side of the room. This deposit, containing ceramics dated between the 1st and 3rd centuries as well as part of the flat base of a late Roman jar/basin or chamber pot dated to *c.* 4th–5th century, sealed wall 7379 and the southern end of wall 3311 (see Fig. 6.34).

The peristyle courtyard

As well as causing damage internally, the earthquake seems to have caused some structural damage to the walls of the Phase 3a outer pool within the peristyle courtyard. This

damage appears not to have been repaired, but instead the walls were partially dismantled, leaving only a low retaining wall standing. Along the northern side of the outer pool a layer of very compacted rubble (3871) was then dumped into the gap between the inner (3719) and outer (3822) pool walls, while to the west of this, a greyish-green clayey silt deposit (7239) (2.60×0.95 m) built up over the pool's floor (Fig. 5.16). This deposit varied in thickness from 40 mm to 100 mm, being thicker towards the western corner where the underlying floor of the Phase 3a pool (3872) had been damaged.

The inner pool by contrast seems to have remained in use, the internal floor being resurfaced at this time (7406) (Fig. 5.17). A new outlet drain (7390) was built against the northwest corner of the inner pool (Fig. 5.18). A small ceramic pipe, visible extending from the northern wall of the pool, connected the pool to the new drain. Constructed over deposit 7239, the drain ran diagonally across the outer pool. The western end of this drain had been cut through the northwest corner of the outer pool to allow it to connect to the earlier outlet drain (7161).

A second, smaller drain (7257/7014), which ran into 7390, was also constructed against the western edge of the outer pool (see Fig. 4.5). This drain, which to the south cut across the western corner and floor of the outer pool, presumably drained a new water feature located beyond the southern edge of the excavations.

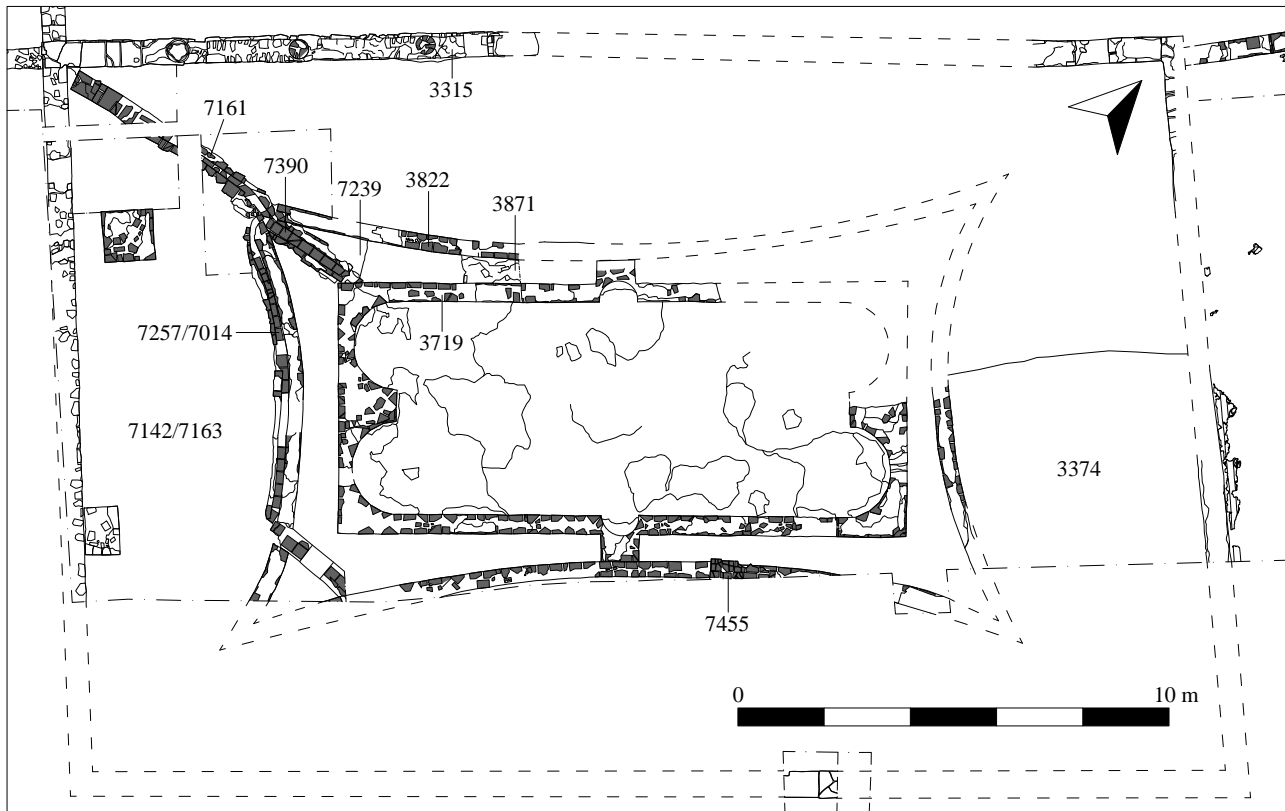


Figure 5.16. The peristyle courtyard in Phase 5



Figure 5.17. Detail of the resurfaced floor of the inner pool (50 cm scale)

Following the construction of the drains, the sides of the outer pool were deliberately infilled with a thick (c. 0.25 m), homogenous greyish-green silty clay (3858/7162, 7164/7145, 3901 and 3825), perhaps to allow for the planting of shrubs and flowers to create a natural border around the inner pool (Fig. 5.19). Mixed throughout these deposits were frequent patches of a yellow sandy mortar, broken tile fragments and pieces of waterproof plaster, indicative of demolition material from the dismantled outer



Figure 5.18. The new outlet drain 7390 built across the northwest corner of the outer pool (1 m scale)

wall of the pool. Ceramics dating from the 2nd, 3rd, 4th and early 5th centuries were recovered from these deposits, along with a radiate coin of Valerian I (AD 253–60) (SF 6146/Cat. 73).¹⁹

As part of these alterations the area of the courtyard to



Figure 5.21. View looking west of the Phase 5 blocking wall 3315 built between and around the columns of the north colonnade (30 cm and 1 m scale)

the east of the pool seems to have been levelled over at this time. This was necessary as this part of the courtyard appears to have slumped slightly, presumably due to the shifting of the underlying deposits. A light brownish-green silty clay (3374) containing abundant mortar and tile fragments was spread across the area to consolidate it (Fig. 5.20). Ceramics dating from the 2nd/3rd century as well as the late 4th/early 5th century were recovered from the deposit. A worn silver *As* of Emperor Domitian (AD 81–96) (SF 6069/Cat. 37) and a coin of the Emperor Crispus (AD 320) (SF 6399/Cat. 91) were also recovered.

The western side of the courtyard also seems to have been re-levelled at this time, as indicated by layer 7142/7163. Sealing drain 7257/7014, this layer contained a mix of 4th- to early 5th-century ceramics as well as some residual earlier 2nd–3rd-century pieces. Coins of the House of Valentinian (AD 364–78) (SF 6375/Cat. 186) and Trajan (AD 97–116) (SF 6143/Cat. 39) were also found within this layer, together with a quantity of animal bone, glass and various copper-alloy objects (SFs 6374, 6386, 6391, 6397, 6400, 6401, 6405, 6406, 6407, 6409 and 6420). Once levelled, a layer of tiles (7455) found partially covering the southern wall of the pool may suggest a new surface was subsequently laid across this side of the courtyard.

Changes also seem to have been made to the colonnade of the north portico. A blocking wall (3315), of which only the footings survive at the western end of the portico, was constructed between and around the columns of the colonnade (Fig. 5.21). Built from a mix of tile and limestone bonded with a very tough white mortar with frequent limestone chipping inclusions, this might have formed a low, waist-high balustrade wall, with the columns extending out of the top. Similar low walls may also have been built around the other three sides of the portico. Fragments of walling surviving beneath the later eastern wall of the Phase 7 basilica, directly over the northeast corner of the colonnade, suggest the corner columns may have been replaced by right-angled stone-built piers.

The porticoes were also altered internally during this period (Fig. 5.22). A new room (4.65 × 2.77 m in size) defined by two cross walls built out from the northwestern corner of the northern stylobate was constructed in front of the marine entrance. Wall 7242, made with angular pieces of limestone rubble bonded with an orangey-brown shelly

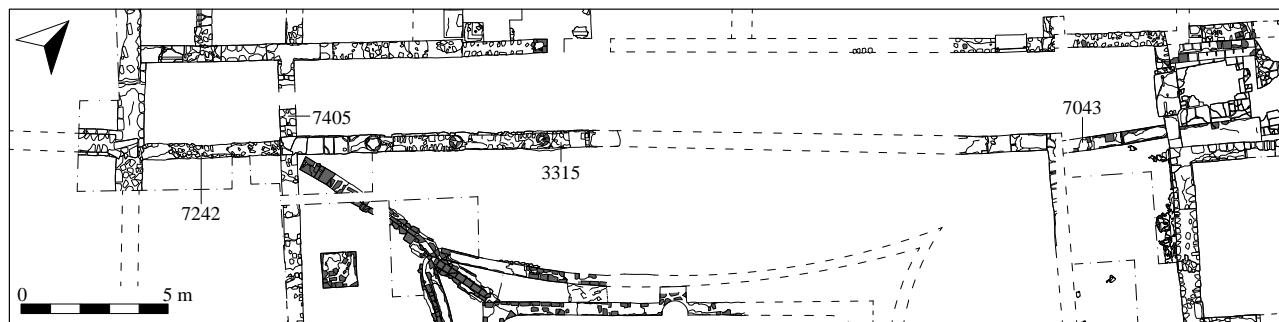


Figure 5.22. Plan of the alterations made to the porticoes in Phase 5

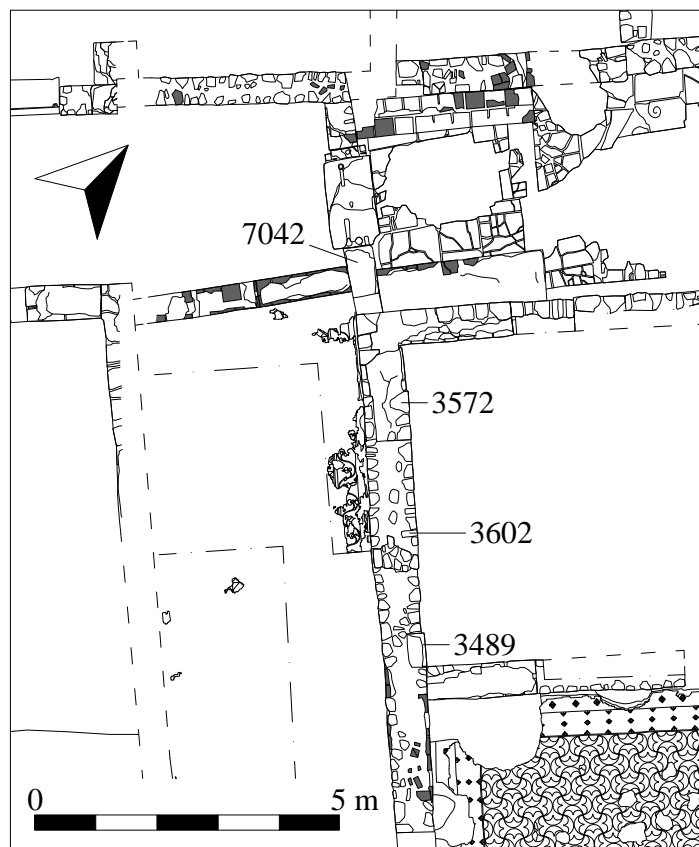


Figure 5.23. Plan of wall 3602

mortar, was built across the west portico and abutted the eastern wall of the marine entrance (7201), just to the south of its main doorway. Today the wall survives only to foundation level but it can be assumed that originally it would have been divided by a doorway allowing access to the west portico. The eastern wall of the room (7405) measured 1.20 m in length before ending in a doorway (1.20 m wide), the northern side of which was formed by the northern continuation of wall 3377, the western stylobate foundation that extended across the north portico.

At the northern end of the east portico, a brick wall (7043) incorporating a doorway was built across the width of the corridor, presumably to restrict access to this eastern wing.



Figure 5.24. The western face of wall 3602

The east wing

These rooms appear to have remained in use during this period, although major structural repairs were undertaken to the western wall, which appears to have been damaged in the intervening period. Wall 3489 had collapsed almost entirely, while the front face of wall 3572 had also fallen away. A new wall (3602) was built to replace these, the western face of which was partially built over the line of the Phase 3 mosaic 3838 (Fig. 5.23). This new wall also blocked-in the original doorway between walls 3489 and 3572. Constructed of rectangular limestone blocks bonded with a greyish-white mortar, the wall had a distinct tile

course running the length of its western face at a height of 0.26 m from the base of the wall (Fig. 5.24).

The store rooms to the south of Room 5 were also retained during this period, although a layer of plaster (3596/128) overlying the western room's floor (3501) suggests that some damage may have occurred to these buildings, the plaster presumably having fallen from the surrounding walls. Despite this damage appearing to be minimal, the floor of the western room was raised slightly at this time, as indicated by a levelling layer (3498/123) found across the room, sealing

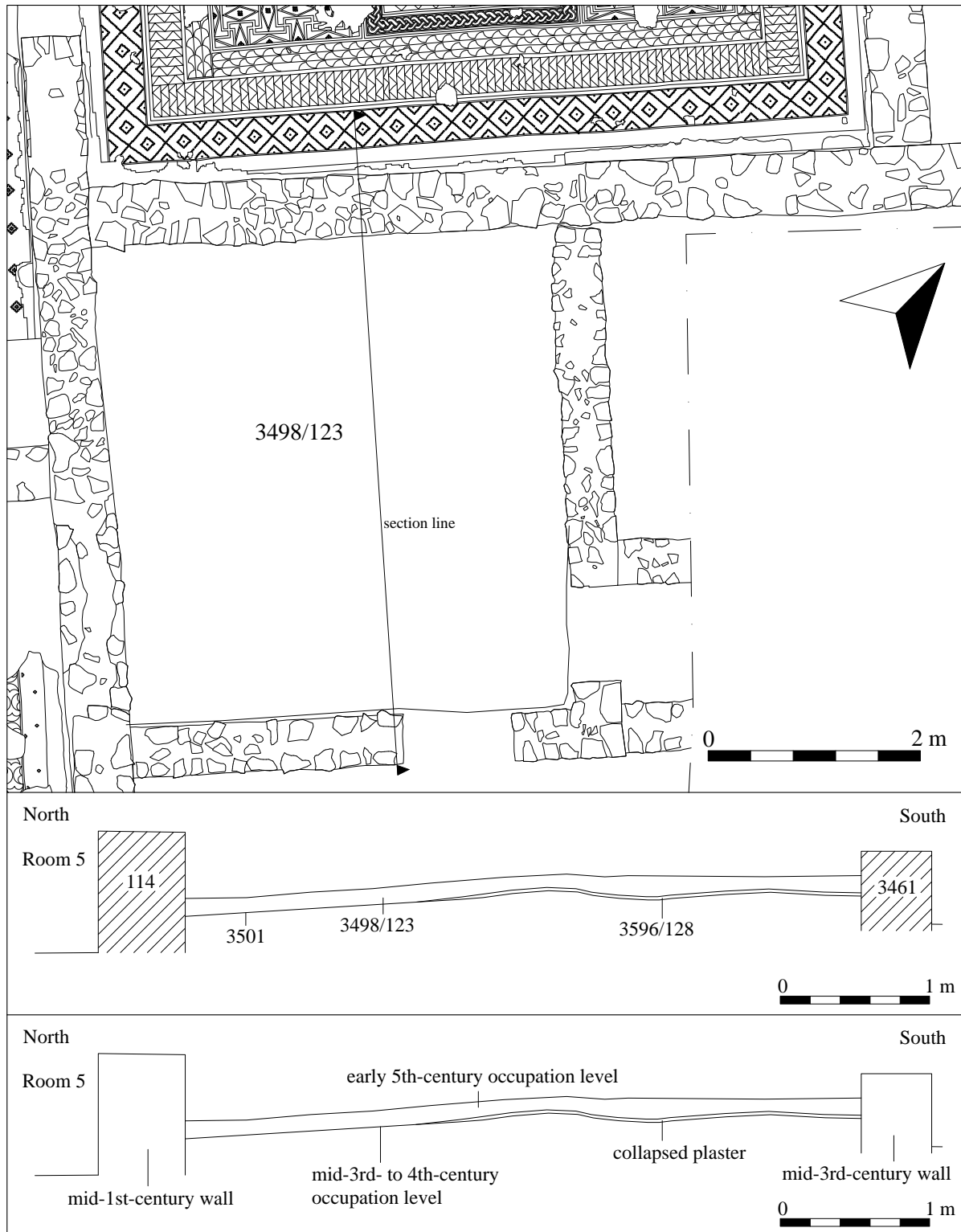


Figure 5.25. West-facing section across the storeroom of the east wing showing the Phase 5 features

the collapsed wall plaster (Fig. 5.25). This layer also sealed the post-hole 3575, implying the roof prop it supported had either fallen during the period the *domus* was abandoned or been deliberately removed as part of the alterations made to the room at this time. Various iron and copper fragments were found in this levelling deposit (SFs 2749, 2752, 2753,

6558, 6561, 6564, 6571, 6574, 6582, 6584, 6585, 6586, 6588, 6589, and 6590), along with two possible bone needles (SF 6563 and 6591) and a bone pin (SF 6560). A very corroded coin of Hadrian (AD 117–38) (SF 6562/Cat. 44), along with a second corroded coin dated to the 4th–5th century (SF 6583/Cat. 379), was also recovered from the deposit.

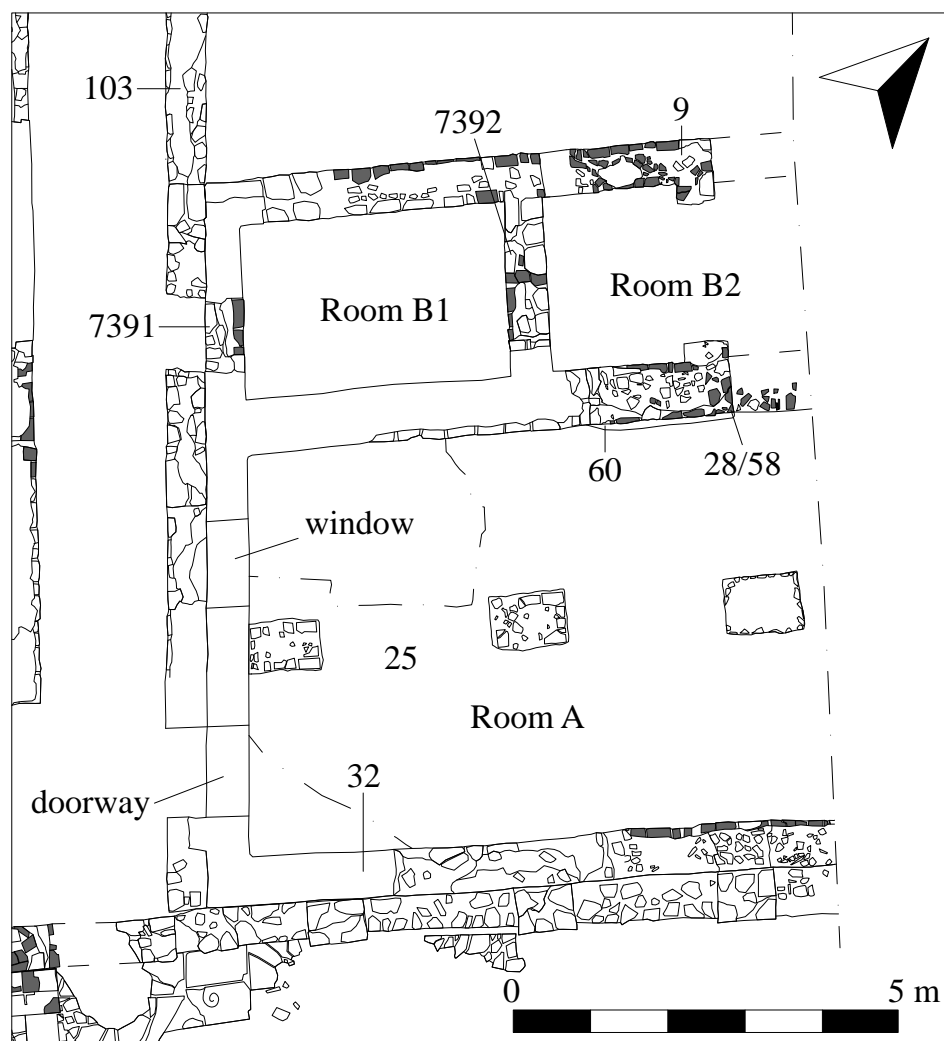


Figure 5.26. The eastern cistern in Phase 5

The eastern cistern

Possibly due to it having been damaged, a number of changes were made to the eastern cistern (Fig. 5.26). The eastern end of Room B2 was partially demolished and was subsequently replaced by two right-angled walls (9 and 28/58). Constructed with alternating courses of single lines of well-cut limestone blocks set between double lines of bricks/tiles and bonded with a light yellow-pink mortar, these walls created a new small room measuring 1.75×2.25 m internally (Fig. 5.27). In the process of removing the southern wall of the room (33) the *cocciopesto* floor (25) within Room A to the south was cut. This cut (60) subsequently acted as the foundation trench for wall 28. Once constructed, the outer faces of the walls were covered in a white plaster.

In Room B1 a hole was cut through both the eastern and western walls of the room (Fig. 5.28). The western cut, the base of which was level with the original floor of the cistern, also removed part of the Phase 1 road wall (103) directly behind the cistern. These cuts were deliberate and were probably made by workmen involved in making

alterations to the cistern, in order to provide access into the building during this period. Once the alterations were completed, the holes were blocked-in (walls 7391 and 7392). Although the construction of these blocking walls was slightly rougher than the cistern's original walls, it could be seen that an attempt had been made to try and imitate the alternating courses of brick and rectangular limestone slabs of the earlier walls. The interior faces of these blocking walls were subsequently covered by a layer of pink hydraulic cement (10 mm thick), suggesting the room continued in use as a cistern.

The southern room of the earlier cistern, Room A, also seems to have been altered as part of these changes. Unlike Room B1, this room appears to have no longer been used as a cistern but rather had become a vestibule through which one passed in order to reach the now-reduced cistern. In the southwest corner, a doorway 2.20 m high and 1.20 m wide was cut through wall 32, the western side of which also partially removed the eastern road wall 103 directly behind the cistern. There is no sign of a surviving arch or imposts of any sort and the opening may have been left in



Figure 5.27. View of the Phase 5 right-angled walls 9 and 28/58 built at the eastern end of Room B2 (1 m scale)



Figure 5.28. View of Room B1 showing the blocking walls 7391 and 7392 (2 m scale)

its rough condition. A second opening was also cut through wall 32 at this time. Positioned *c.* 1.50 m to the north, this opening, as with the southern doorway just described, reopened a window that was originally part of the Phase 1 eastern roadside wall (see Fig. 3.27). This may have been necessary to illuminate an otherwise rather dark space. Further windows may have been cut through the southern wall of the building.

The dating evidence for these alterations relies on the material recovered from context 15, a make-up layer that was spread across the open area to the north of the cistern at this time to account for the slumping of the underlying deposits and through which the foundation of the northern wall (9) of the reduced eastern chamber (Room B2) had partially been cut through. As well as some early Imperial ceramics the deposit also included two thin LRA 1 handles, a type which dates from the late 4th/early 5th century. An ARS 67 rim, which again dates to the 5th century, was also recovered from the deposit. Some later sherds, including a LRA 2 handle, a possible Keay 52 handle, and a LRA 2 rim, were also recovered. The LRA 2 rim is described as ‘thin’, suggesting a 6th-century date. The mixed nature of these ceramics makes dating the deposit based on these alone difficult. However, a coin of Honorius (AD 410–23), minted in Rome, was also recovered from the deposit (SF 2355/Cat. 244). The coin was in good condition, showing little sign of wear, suggesting that it was not in circulation for

very long, perhaps arriving on the Vrina Plain soon after it was minted. As the northern chambers continued to function during the succeeding basilica phase, the 5th–6th-century ceramics can be seen as intrusive, being pressed into the outer surface during the later use of the area and therefore representing the date of the final deposition of context 15. The construction of the new cistern can therefore be dated tentatively to the early 5th century.

The Southern Buildings

It may also have been at this time that the western room of the building located just beyond the southwest corner of the southern courtyard was altered, with the floor level of the room being substantially raised, perhaps due to rising ground water (Fig. 5.29). Initially the room was infilled with a light to mid-greenish-grey clay silt (7708/7712/7718), varying in depth from 0.18 m to 0.30 m. The deposit slumped from east to west and as a result a second, slightly less-compact levelling layer of mid-greenish-grey clay silt (7707/7719) was spread across the western half of the room. Over the top of these levelling layers a thick spread of *cocciopesto* (7720/7721/7722) (0.10–0.15 m thick) was laid to form the room’s floor. Along the west face of wall 7723 the floor surface could be seen to cover the broken edge of the wall’s original plaster render, suggesting the decoration of the earlier room did not survive at this time.

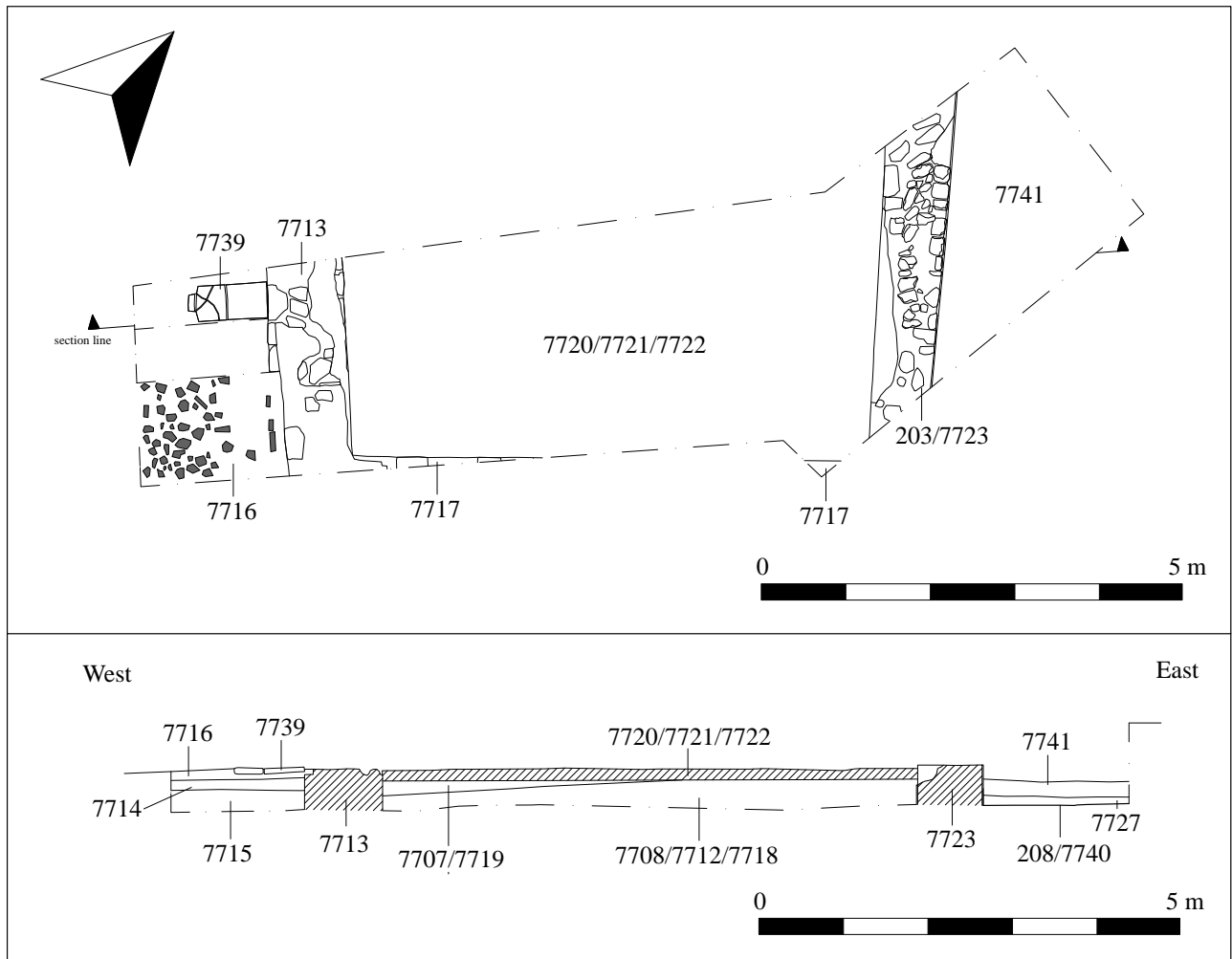


Figure 5.29. Plan and section of the building west of the southern courtyard in Phase 5

As part of this alteration, the floor of the eastern room of the building was also raised. Overlying the floor was a light greyish-white deposit of mixed sand and mortar (7727). Originally this eastern room appears to have been elaborately decorated as several pieces of plaster *stucco* (SF 6306) (see Volume 6.2, Fig. 6.63), together with numerous fragments of moulded plaster, were found within the demolition layer (7727) sealing floor 208/7740. Numerous pieces of painted wall plaster, some with red bands and others with blue/black lines, were also recovered from 7727.

Dating evidence for this alteration is limited as only a small part of the levelling layers was excavated. These deposits were only identified at the base of a series of linear slots that were found to have been cut through the *cocciopesto* floor in a later phase.²⁰ Despite these limitations, layer 7707 did produce ceramics dated to the 5th century.

Externally there also seems to have been changes at this time as two large, flat limestone slabs (7739) (0.46×0.43 m and 0.35×0.41 m in size) were found against the western face of wall 7713 (Fig. 5.30). Associated with the slabs

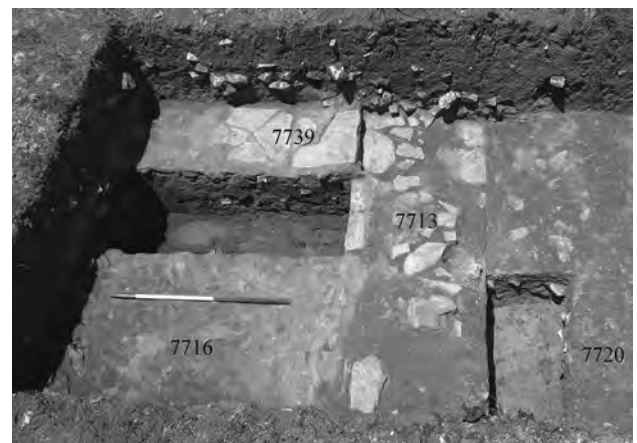


Figure 5.30. View of the Phase 5 changes made to the west of wall 7713 (1 m scale)

was a mid-blackish-brown silty clay (7716) containing a large amount of broken tile that had been spread across 7714, the alluvial bank edging the inlet channel. As the level of the slabs is the same as that of the *cocciopesto*

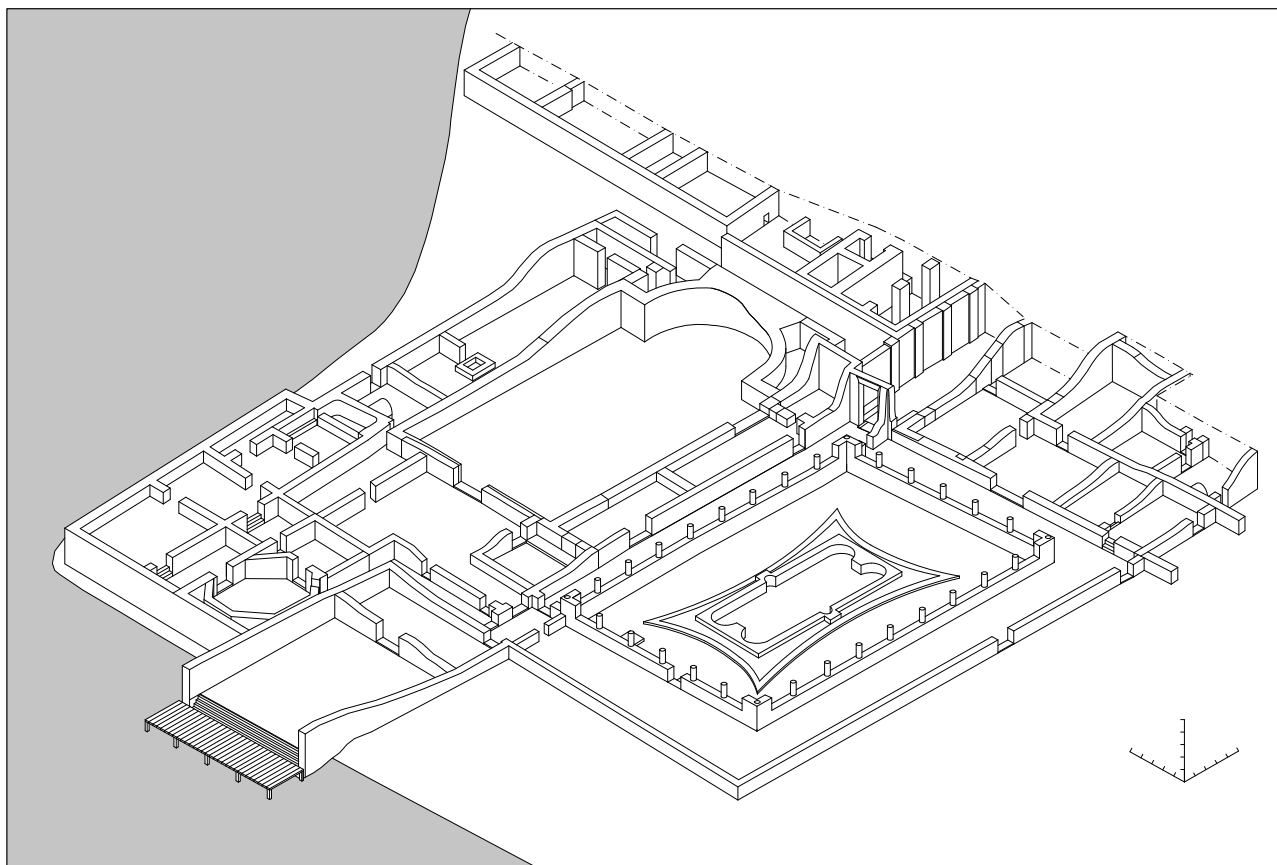


Figure 5.31. Axonometric reconstruction of the domus in Phase 5

floor within the western room it is possible that these may be contemporary. If so, this suggests that 7716 formed a rough external surface, the limestone slabs 7739 having been laid in front of a new doorway cut through wall 7713 to provide access to the room beyond.

The southern courtyard also seems to have been raised at this time, as indicated by layer 7806. This layer (7806) contained a mix of mid-/late 4th- and 5th-century ceramics.

Summary/Interpretation

Following the abandonment of the house, possibly due to seismic activity sometime towards the end of the 4th century, the site appears to have been reoccupied at the beginning of the 5th century (Fig. 5.31).²¹ The central part of the apse of the apsidal hall, which may have collapsed due to the earthquake, was rebuilt. To support the new structure, two triangular buttresses were incorporated into the build, placed in the angles between the apse wall and the western face of the earlier wall behind the apse.

Along the northern side of the western courtyard fronting the entrance to the hall a new room was built. Following its construction the courtyard was levelled over. Changes were also made to the rooms along the northern side of the hall. Within the eastern room a possible water feature was built, the construction of which resulted in the removal of the room's southern wall in order to open the space up.

Within the peristyle courtyard the eastern side of the open space seems to have been levelled over at this time due to slumping of the underlying deposits. The walls of the outer pool were dismantled so that only a low retaining wall survived, presumably as these walls had been damaged during the seismic activity. The inner pool of the central water feature remained in use, the floor being resurfaced and a new outlet drain created, cut through the northwest corner of the outer pool in order to connect it to the earlier outlet drain. A second, smaller interconnected drain was constructed up against the western edge of the outer pool. Cutting across the western corner of the outer pool, this may have drained a new water feature positioned to the south of the earlier pool. The outer pool was then infilled, possibly to allow for the planting of shrubs and flowers around the inner pool.

Further changes thought to date to this period can be seen in the northern portico where a series of blocking walls was built between the columns of the colonnade. Only the footings of these walls survive at the western end of the portico but they seem to have completely surrounded the columns, probably forming a low balustrade wall around the lower half of the column. Access around the portico was altered as a new room was built fronting the marine entrance, and a wall was built across the northern end of the east portico. These interventions appear to have been aimed at formalising the access route to the northern part

of the house as well as restricting who could enter the rest of the house.

To the east, possibly due to having been damaged in the intervening period, the three-chambered cistern was also altered. While the western chamber continued in use as a cistern, the eastern chamber was reduced in size following the rebuilding of its eastern wall but it continued to serve as an access room to the cistern. The southern chamber became an anteroom, accessed by way of a doorway cut through the room's western wall. Due to problems caused by rising ground water, the floor level of the Southern Building was also raised, as was the level of the southern courtyard.

Phase 6: mid- to late 5th century – abandonment?

It is difficult to estimate for how long this refurbished Vrina Plain *domus* was occupied. Archaeologically very little occupational evidence, in the form of pottery or coins dating to the middle part of the 5th century, has been recovered from the site. Such a lack of evidence may suggest continuity of use, as it is possible the buildings were systematically cleaned out and any debris and general household rubbish was removed and dumped either away from the house, or into the channel.

Alternatively, this lack of material evidence could imply that the house was not occupied at this time. Due to later structural changes evidence for this is difficult to discern within the *domus* itself, but to the east the poor structural condition of the Temple mausoleum and the buildings surrounding the Monument indicates that the upkeep of these structures was waning during this period. The tombs within the Temple mausoleum are thought to have been robbed and smashed at this time (see Chapter 8), while the rectangular building around Monument 1, which had only been built at the end of the 4th century, appears to have been demolished sometime during the mid-5th century (see Chapter 9).

Contemporary evidence from the Triconch Palace appears to show that this complex was abandoned from about AD 420.²² A number of reasons for this abandonment have been suggested including financial issues, death, lack of interest and the problems caused by a rising water table,²³ and it is possible that any one of these problems may have affected the Vrina Plain household too. A further factor which may have affected the Vrina Plain *domus* is the date of the collapse of the aqueduct.

The aqueduct

It had been thought that the Xarra–Butrint aqueduct collapsed on the Vrina Plain towards the end of the 4th century and that this event was further dramatic evidence of the earthquake that is thought to have occurred in the region towards the end of this century.²⁴ Importantly, excavations at the eastern end of the initial drainage ditch



Figure 5.32. Collapsed aqueduct pier 1072 found at the eastern end of the initial drainage ditch excavations

excavations in 2002 revealed one of the collapsed piers of the aqueduct (1072/1073) (Fig. 5.32). Beneath the pier was a dark-brown clayey silt (1079) that had built up around the base of the pier whilst it was standing. This ground surface contained two worn but datable pieces of pottery including a handle of a LRA 1 amphora of the late 4th or first half of the 5th century, and the handle of a North Palestinian amphora (Agora M334 type), again of the late 4th or 5th century. These dates provide a *terminus ante quem* for the collapse and seem to imply that it occurred later than initially thought. The aqueduct by this time had been standing for over 400 years and, due to its construction on marshy deposits, the threat of collapse seems to have been a constant concern, with repairs to stabilise the structure presumably being an ongoing feature throughout the centuries.²⁵ The 4th-century earthquake may certainly have weakened the structure but it would seem that it was not until well into the 5th century that the structure finally collapsed.²⁶ With the aqueduct damaged, the supply of fresh water to the *domus* would have ceased, causing serious repercussions for such a large household. The water from the Vivari Channel would have been undrinkable and it must be assumed that until a solution could be found, the decision in the short term was to leave the house.

This decision may have been further compounded by the possibility that the bridge which had connected Butrint to its hinterland may have partially collapsed during this period. Again this can only tentatively be suggested as direct evidence is lacking, but if the bridge was out of use, even temporarily, the link to the city from the plain would have been broken, leaving the house and its owner isolated.²⁷

Summary/Interpretation

The archaeological evidence seems to suggest that little activity occurred within the *domus* during the middle part of the 5th century. Together with the Temple mausoleum

and the buildings around the Monument, the indications are that the *domus* may have been abandoned once more. Tectonic movement from the later 4th century, together with a rise in sea level associated with the subsidence of the surrounding coastal areas, may have been partially to blame but of more significance may be the collapse of the Xarra–Butrint aqueduct.

Excavations below a collapsed pier produced pottery dating to the early 5th century sealed beneath it. This would imply that the aqueduct did not collapse as a result of the purported earthquake thought to have occurred towards the end of the 4th century but continued in use for at least another half century. Without a plentiful supply of water, a household the size of the Vrina Plain *domus* would not have been able to support itself for long. The reason for the collapse of the aqueduct is unclear but it may be that a further seismic shock finally weakened a structure already partially damaged following the earlier tremor at the end of the 4th century. A second shock may also have caused the road bridge to collapse partially and it may be that these two events combined forced the owner to take the decision to abandon the house, at least temporarily, at this time.

Notes

- 1 Bescoby notes that the Vrina Plain was formed within a tectonically controlled basin bounded on both sides by fault lines (Bescoby 2013, 25). These run along the edge of the Mount Mile range to the east and along the northeast edge of the Korafi Hills to the west. The one along the base of the Mount Mile range appears stable, and the fault lines bounding Lake Butrint also appear to be inactive. However, the one following the edge of the Korafi hills remains active. Active fault zones like this are the usual locations for earthquakes and, as Bescoby notes, stresses building up along this controlling fault are likely to reactivate smaller, interconnected faults within the locality.
- 2 For a discussion of the significance of prone burials see Taylor 2008, who suggests that rather than being accidental, prone burials were a deliberate means of constraining the spirit of the dead so that they could not rise and walk among the living, a fear of which appears to have been an underlying belief in the Roman psyche. As in the case of the Vrina Plain burials, further constraints, such as binding the hands and legs of the individual and placing stones or tiles over the burial to weigh the body down, appear to have been a common feature of these burials.
- 3 Beta 260136. The radiocarbon dating of the skeletons was undertaken by the Beta Analytic Radiocarbon Dating Laboratory, Florida, USA.
- 4 A fragment of a (late?) 4th-century ‘Remola tipo tardio A’ amphora/Agora M 235 was also recovered from the burial. For more information on this see Volume 6.3, Chapter 4, Fig. 4.1.12. The piece is described as coming from the skull of skeleton 2149.
- 5 By the time the grave was dug, the tile floor surface 7373, which is thought to have floored the open courtyard (see Chapter 4), had been partially removed.
- 6 I am grateful to Angela Soler for this information on the pathology.
- 7 Guidoboni 1994, 261–7; Hernandez and Çondi 2008, 289–9; Hodges, Saraci and Bowden 1997, 217; Martin 2004, 92.
- 8 Pavlides and Caputo 2004, 163.
- 9 Hernandez and Çondi 2008, 290.
- 10 Bescoby 2013, 27.
- 11 Hernandez and Çondi 2008, 290.
- 12 Bowden, Francis, Gilkes and Lako 2011, 24–5, 37.
- 13 *Ibid.*
- 14 Bescoby 2007, 95–6.
- 15 Context 7188 also contained an intrusive piece of pottery dating to the 5th or 6th century.
- 16 As well as containing 3rd- and 4th-century ceramics, context 3910 also contained some pieces dated to the 5th/6th century. These pieces appear to be intrusive. Context 3910 was located in a slot dug between the Phase 1 wall 3978 and a Phase 7 wall (2112). Between these walls a small room was created, with a threshold at the western end and a staircase at the eastern end that was cut through 3910; it is assumed these later ceramics became pressed into 3910 in this phase of use.
- 17 A late 4th-/early 5th-century coin found in layer 3945 (SF 6254/Cat. 237) probably also came from layer 3910, layer 3945 underlying 3910.
- 18 Some fragments of early/first half of the 6th-century pottery were also recovered pressed into this surface (see Volume 6.3, Chapter 5, Fig. 5.9.5). These pieces are thought to be intrusive and were probably trampled into layer 7021 when the room was levelled over (layers 3998 and 3999) and a small kiln/oven (3996) was inserted in Phase 7.
- 19 Some late 5th- and 6th-century ceramics were also recovered, indicating that this space had been open for a long time.
- 20 See Phase 7 for a discussion of these slots.
- 21 A similar situation has been observed at the Triconch Palace where the 3rd-century Roman *domus* was also reoccupied around AD 400 following the abandonment of the site in the mid-4th century. Over the next twenty years the house underwent a series of major alterations that greatly enlarged the earlier *domus*, culminating with the construction of the Triconch *triclinium* and a large peristyle courtyard (Gilkes and Lako 2004, 167; Bowden, Francis, Gilkes and Lako 2011, 24–55).
- 22 Bowden, Francis, Gilkes and Lako 2011, 53–5; Bowden 2011a, 297–300.
- 23 Bowden 2011a, 299.
- 24 Crowson and Gilkes 2007, 122.
- 25 Repairs to the aqueduct can be seen at a number of points across the plain. At the southern end near Xarra, a reinforcing wall of concrete, faced in a kind of *opus incertum*, had been built between two of the piers in order to stabilise the arch. Immediately to the south, a further stretch of walling in a similar technique infilled at least two gaps and may even have replaced the intervening pier (Wilson 2013, 81). The construction technique of some of the piers also differs from the brick-faced concrete on stone foundations that is thought to represent the first phase of the structure, with these alternative builds being seen as a later addition (Martin 2004, 91).
- 26 The construction of a new nymphaeum within Butrint at the beginning of the 5th century seems to confirm that the water supply to the town was still functioning into the early 5th century (Martin 2004, 92–3; Bowden and Martin 2004, 219). This is confirmed by a build-up of limescale along the southern end of the western exterior wall of the header

tank. Formed by water either leaking or overflowing from the tank, the residue cuts across the once-horizontal coursing of the structure, especially towards its base, following the slope of the tilting structure thus indicating this happened while the structure was still in use (Martin 2004, 91).

- 27 The closure of the bridge is assumed to have only been for a short time as it seems to have been functioning again by the end of the 5th century, since the indications are that the road fronting the Temple mausoleum was resurfaced in the late

5th/early 6th century (see Chapter 8). The new 6th-century city wall, built along the shoreline of Butrint, appears to have respected the bridge, implying that it remained standing and continued to be a means of access into the city from the valley beyond (Leppard 2013, 103). Interestingly, this dating directly corresponds to the period when activity within the *domus*, as well as around the Temple mausoleum and Monument, appears to have picked up again.

6 The 6th century AD – the religious house on the Plain

Simon Greenslade

Introduction

This chapter reviews the archaeological and structural sequence forming Phases 7 to 9, covering the 6th century (Plate 6.1). The settlement was remodelled with the inclusion of an apsidal basilica built out from the south side of the apsidal hall. The religious house also included a building along the western side of the apsidal hall and a new bath-house built within the cistern of the earlier Phase 2 suburb. Along with the new buildings, several of the rooms in the earlier *domus* were repaired and reused, while a number of burials were interred along the eastern side of the earlier house.

Phase 7: early 6th century (Fig. 6.1)

The basilica

As discussed in the previous chapter, the Vrina Plain *domus* appears to have been abandoned during the second half of the 5th century. Social, private, political and/or environmental issues may all have played a part in this. Whatever the reason, the situation was only temporary as, by the end of the century, the house had been reoccupied.

The focal point of the new complex was a large north-south-aligned basilica (Fig. 6.2). Defined by walls 3089, 3299, 3275 and 3084/3298, the new structure was built out from the south side of the original apsidal hall following the partial demolition of the earlier building's southern wall 3067

(Fig. 6.3). Measuring 11.35 m in length by 15.23–14.63 m in width, the building narrowing towards its southern end, the basilica covered the eastern end of the north portico of the earlier *domus* and extended into the courtyard, where its construction cut through a layer of greenish-grey silty clay (3 725/3883/3364/3767/7237/3823/7100/7206/7210) (varying in thickness from 0.10 m to 0.24 m). This deposit had been spread across the courtyard to form a firm foundation on which to build the new structure; it also sealed the walls of the outer pool leaving only the inner pool visible. A robber cut (3866) at the southern end of wall 3702 (the fill of which (3865) was covered by 3725) indicates that the outer pool's walls may have been further dismantled just before this levelling deposit was spread across the area (Fig. 6.4). The deposit contained a mixed ceramic assemblage including material from the 2nd/3rd, late 4th/early 5th, mid-5th and 6th centuries. These dates are corroborated by the coins which have a similar date range, with the latest covering the period from the 5th to 6th century (SF 6066/Cat. 433).¹

The walls of the basilica were 0.60 m wide and were built of roughly coursed limestone blocks interspersed with occasional tile fragments, bonded with a yellowy-white mortar. The eastern wall of the building appeared to follow the alignment of the southern side wall of the earlier hall's apse, the northern end of wall 3089 having been directly built against the inner edge of wall 3068. The western wall 3084/3298, on the other hand, did not follow the alignment of the earlier build but was angled slightly to the east of it.

Table 6.1. Overview of the development of the Vrina Plain settlement: Phases 7–9

Phase	Date	Summary
7	Early 6th century	Site reoccupied: new religious focus to house with construction of basilica occupying eastern part of earlier house
8	Mid-6th century	Alterations undertaken due to instability of building as a result of changing environmental conditions
9	Late 6th century	Site abandoned. Building partially destroyed by fire

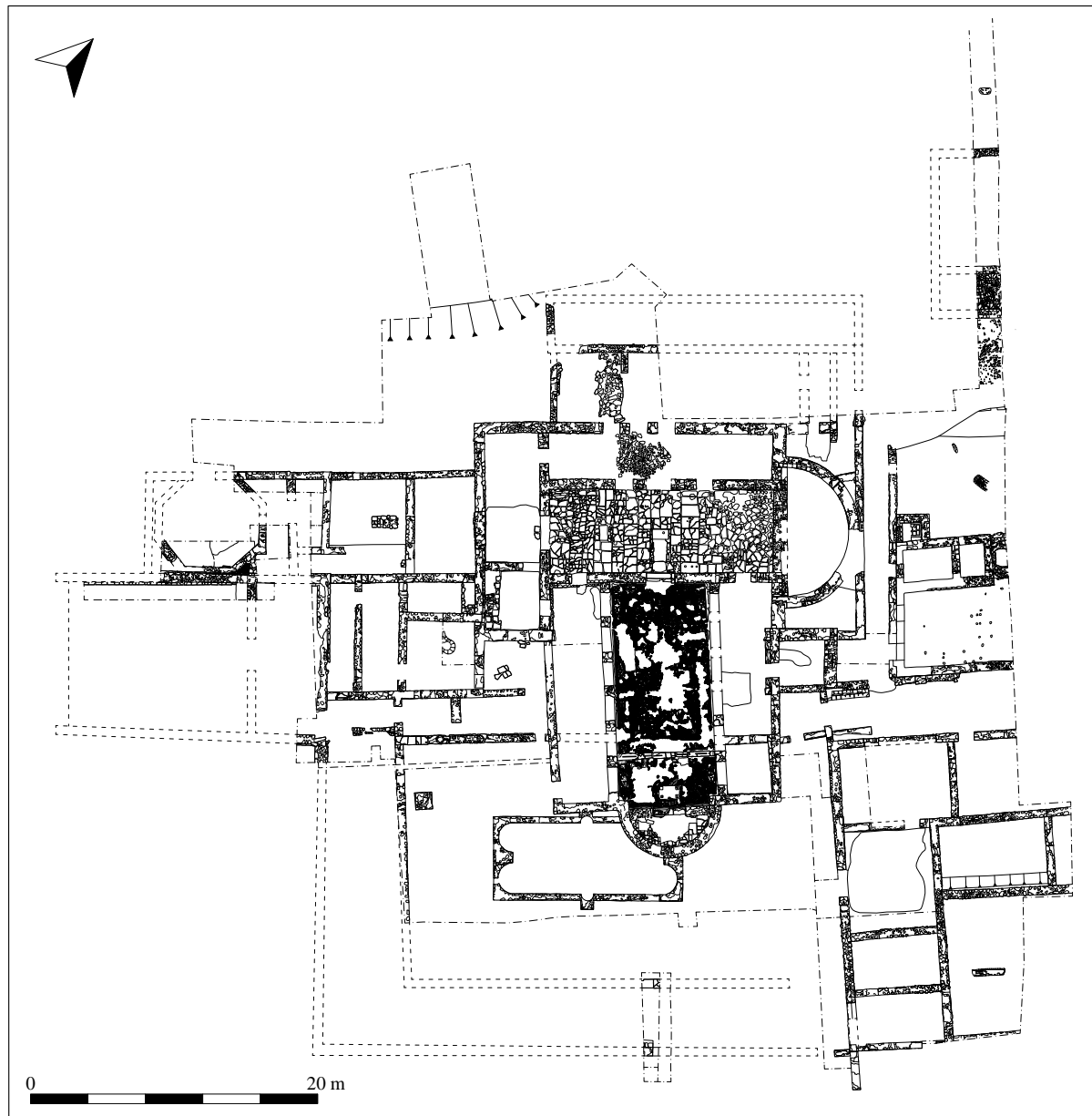


Figure 6.1. The Vrina Plain settlement showing areas of activity in Phase 7 (early 6th century)



Figure 6.2. Aerial view looking south showing the basilica built over the earlier domus

The apse of the building was built over the northern niche of the inner pool. Spreads of mortar (3938) matching that used in the new construction were found across the base of the pool, indicating that this space had now become a preparation area for mixing mortar.

Internally the space was divided into a central area and two flanking aisles defined by a series of seven piers placed either side of the central space (3280, 3285, 3288, 3290, 3078 and 3077 along the western side and 3284, 3286, 3293, 3292, 3073 and 3079 along the eastern side). At the southern end of each row the seventh pier had been incorporated into the build of the basilica's southern end wall (3275). The piers measured 0.75×0.70 m on average and were built with rectangular limestone blocks interspersed with occasional tile fragments. Roughly coursed, they were bonded with a white mortar. A low stylobate foundation

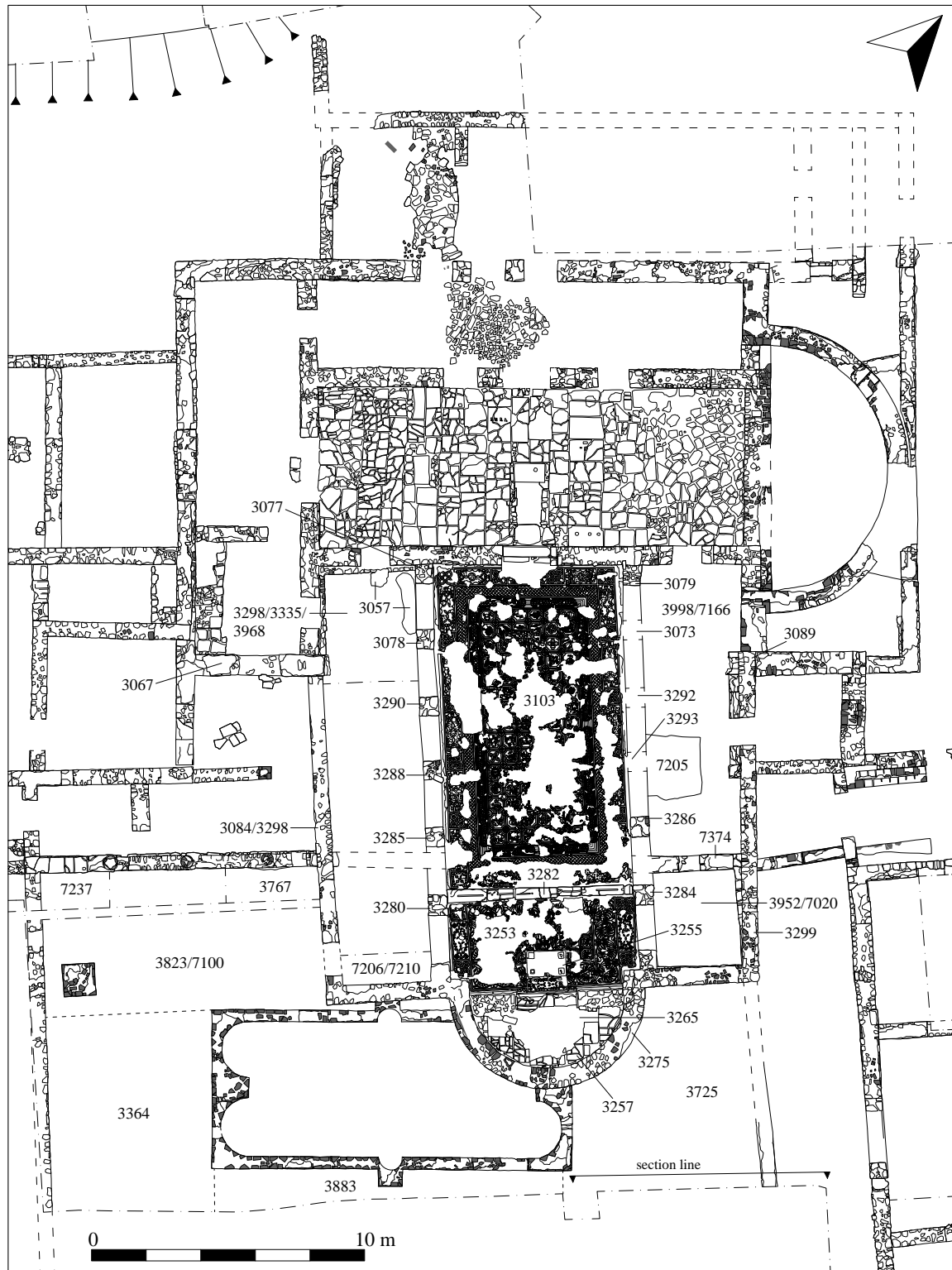


Figure 6.3. The Phase 7 basilica

wall, visible at floor level, connected the piers of each row. Over this, a series of flat limestone slabs had been placed to form an edging between the floors of the aisles and the central chamber. The majority of these slabs had been removed but evidence of them remained at the northern end of the western arcade (see Fig. 7.18).

The nave and sanctuary

The largest chamber of the basilica was the central space, the nave. Due to the slightly offset build of the basilica the internal length of the chamber varied from 15.25 m along its western side to 14.85 m along its eastern side but its width remained constant at 6.95 m. The chamber was

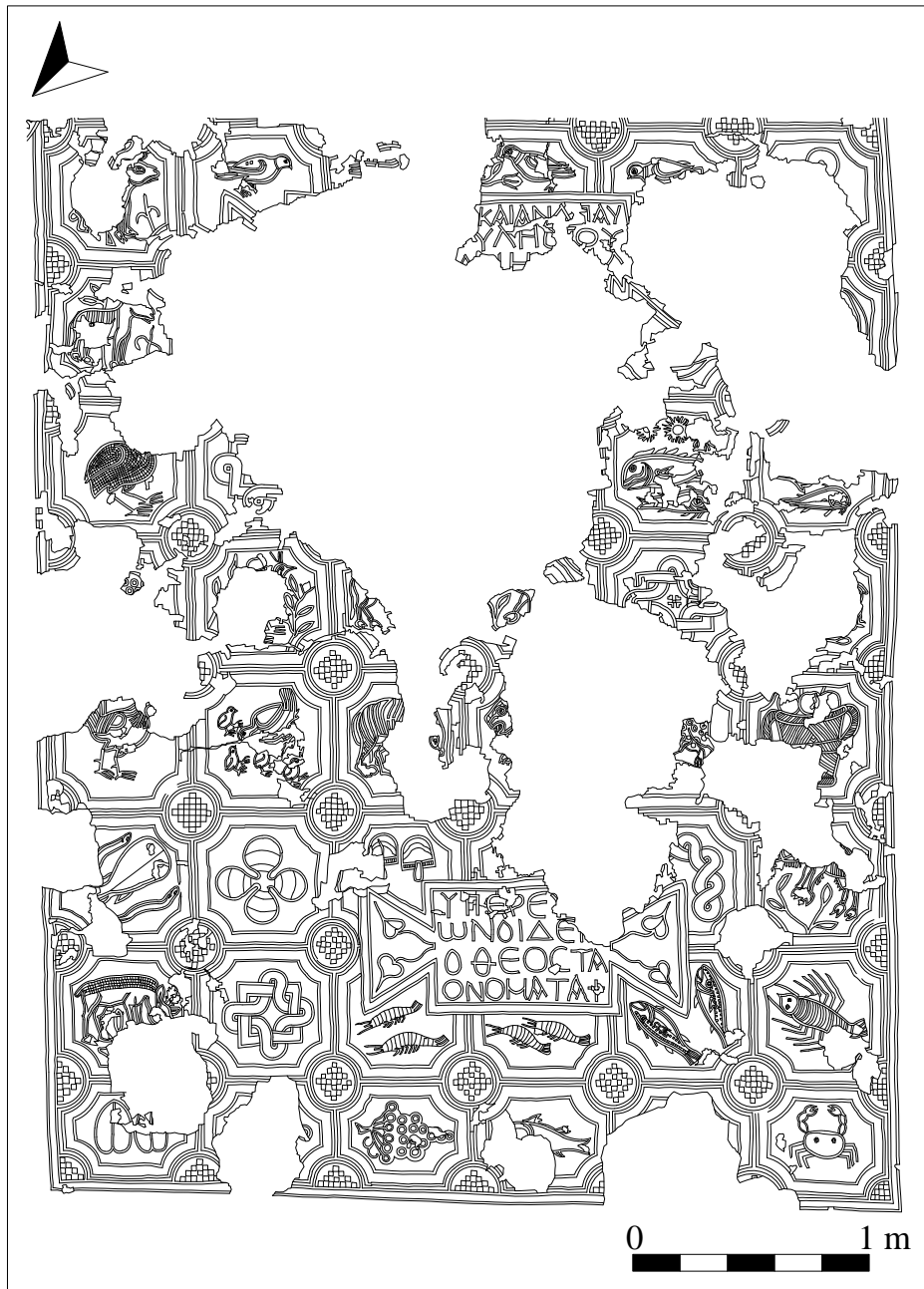


Figure 6.7. Detail of the nave mosaic showing the dedications

The largest block measured $1.60 \times 0.41 \times 0.10$ m while the smallest measured $0.90 \times 0.40 \times 0.10$ m. Cut into the top of the blocks was a series of grooves and holes which would have been used to fix the chancel screen in place.³ The positioning of the cuts indicates the screen was formed by two panels supported between three posts. A central gap (c. 1 m wide) demarcated the access point through the screen, with both edges of the block either side of the gap being noticeably worn.

With the screen in place, the northern end of the chamber became the nave while the southern end became the sanctuary. Both these spaces were floored with a series of intricate mosaic pavements (Fig. 6.6; see also Plate

11.1) (for a full description and discussion on the form and structure of these mosaics see Chapter 11).

The pavement in the nave (3103) consisted of a single composition, stretching from the entrance to the chancel screen (see Plate 11.2). Surrounded by three complex borders, the central motif depicted a variety of sea-creatures, birds and animals, along with images of fruits, flowers, trees and abstract motifs to form a stylised representation of the terrestrial paradise of God's creation on Earth. Set within the floor were two dedications or *tabulae ansatae* carrying Greek inscriptions (Fig. 6.7). The first inscription was located just inside the entrance to the nave (see Plate 11.13).

ΥΠΕΡΕΥ[χης]
 ωΝΟΙΔΕ[ν]
 ΟΘΕΟCTA
 ΟΝΟΜΑΤΑ+

(ὕπερ εὐ[χῆς] ὧν οἶδ[εν] ὁ θεὸς τὰ ὀνόματα)

‘In fulfilment of the vow (prayer) of those whose names
 God knows’

The second inscription was located just beyond the first. Although now largely destroyed, this inscription, due to its size, was probably the more important of the two (see Plate 11.5).

[.....]ΚΑΙΑΝΑΠΙΑΥ
 [.....]ΥΛΗCCOY
 [...]Α?Μ?Η[]Λ
 [.....]Ν
 [.....]
 [.....]

(ὕπερ μνήμης] καὶ ἀναπαύ[σεως τῆς δο]ύλης σου [...]
 α?μ?η [...]λ[...ν[...])

‘[For the memory] and rest/repose of Thy (maid)
 servant [...]

From its ending it would seem that the ‘servant’, and therefore one of the donors, may have been female.⁴

The sanctuary pavement (3253) consisted of two complex borders framing a grid containing a variety of trees, plants, birds, fish and ornamental devices (see Plate 11.9). A larger central panel, depicting an archway with two small birds and flanked by trees, was positioned directly in front of the entrance (see Plate 11.28). Hanging below the arch was a lamp with a flower growing beneath it. Behind this panel, incorporated into the mosaic, was the foundation stone of the altar (3255) (Fig. 6.8). Measuring 1.44 × 0.89 m, six sub-square sockets had been cut into its surface to receive the upright posts that would have supported the altar above; one at the centre point, one at each of the four corners, and a sixth cut into the middle of the rear edge. These cuts were all of different dimensions, the corner sockets measuring 0.20 × 0.21 m, 0.20 × 0.19 m, 0.19 × 0.19 and 0.14 × 0.13 m, the central socket 0.13 × 0.12 m and the notch for the rear post 0.14 × 0.12 m.

Both floors had been bedded onto a layer of pinkish-orange mortar which in turn had been placed over a raft of tightly packed tiles (3312 in the nave and 3254 in the sanctuary). To form a solid support the tiles had been set on edge at a 45° angle. Underlying the tiles was a levelling deposit (3248 in the nave and 3259 in the sanctuary) of dark olive-green clay silt. This deposit had been spread following the construction of the basilica and sealed the demolished walls of the earlier *domus*. As well as pottery dating to the 2nd/3rd century, layer 3248 also contained two walls of a LRA 1 dating to the 5th/6th century.

Further dating for the mosaic was found in the sanctuary where three worn copper *nummi* were found in the backfill (3270) of a cut (3271) thought to have held a post associated with the repairs carried out to the roof over this space in



Figure 6.8. The foundation of the altar incorporated into the floor of the sanctuary



Figure 6.9. The apse of the basilica, looking north. Robber cut 3265, thought to have removed a confessio or relic-deposit placed beneath the floor of the apse, can be seen cut through the centre of the apse

Phase 8 (see below). One was an illegible coin of late 4th-/early 5th-century date (SF 5164/Cat. 1487), a second was a *nummus* of the western emperor Libius Severus (AD 461–65) (SF 5163/Cat. 280), while the third was a *nummus* of the eastern emperor Leo I (AD 457–74) (SF 5165/Cat. 289). The base of cut 3271 was dug through 3259, the levelling layer for the sanctuary mosaic. As the consistency of the fill 3270 matched the levelling layer 3259 it suggests 3270 was dug out of 3259 and then subsequently used to infill the cut 3271 as the prop was only temporary and in place for a short time. The coins thereby provide a *terminus post quem* for the pavement.

The apse

The apse was built as part of the southern wall of the basilica (3275) (Fig. 6.9). Stepped in by 0.63 m from the piers dividing the aisles and nave, the apse was 5.71 m wide and 3.42 m deep. The western side of the apse had been built over the northeast corner of the inner pool, while the eastern side had been built in a construction cut (3701) dug



Figure 6.10. Plan of the Phase 7 features within the aisles of the basilica

though layer 3725. Unlike the nave and sanctuary, the apse had a flagstone floor (3257) made up of rectangular slabs varying in size from between $0.80 \times 0.63 \times 0.10$ m to $0.30 \times 0.24 \times 0.08$ m. Due to the positioning of the altar, the northern edge of which slightly extended over the chord of the apse, floor 3257 did not extend across the whole of the apse but was set back 0.56 m from its northern end. Underlying the floor was a green gritty-clay silt levelling deposit (3266), the consistency of which matched that underlying the pavement in the nave and sanctuary. This in turn had been laid over a rubble layer (3267). Within this layer was a fragment of a 5th/6th-century Samian amphora with *post cocturam* graffiti on it (SF 5161). Together these layers raised the floor of the apse 0.30 m above the level of the floors in the sanctuary and nave. A central step (2.30 m wide), comprising two limestone slabs (3258) set slightly back into the floor, gave access to the space. Thin limestone slabs, placed vertically, edged the floor and step. Unfortunately these had been smashed in antiquity so it is unclear how far these reached. However, as the visible jagged edge of the slabs was found above the level of 3257 this would seem to indicate they had originally extended up

beyond the floor level, possibly forming a screen around the paved area. This may have been necessary as a large robber-cut (3265) ($2.35 \times 1.58 \times 0.59$ m) in the centre of the apse, directly in front of the step, suggests that possibly a *confessio* or relic-deposit of some kind had been placed here beneath the floor.

Directly facing the apse, at the northern end of the nave, was the main entrance to the basilica.

The aisles

As a result of the slight offset build of the basilica the internal dimensions of the aisles varied both from side to side and from end to end. The west aisle measured 15.37 m along its western side and 15.23 m along its eastern side, while its width varied from 3.54 m at its northern end to 3.23 m at its southern end. The east aisle measured 14.81 m along its western side and 14.61 m along its eastern side, while its width varied from 3.67 m at its northern end to 3.13 m at its southern.

The only contemporary contexts reached in the west aisle that were associated with the initial build of the basilica were located at the northern end of the room

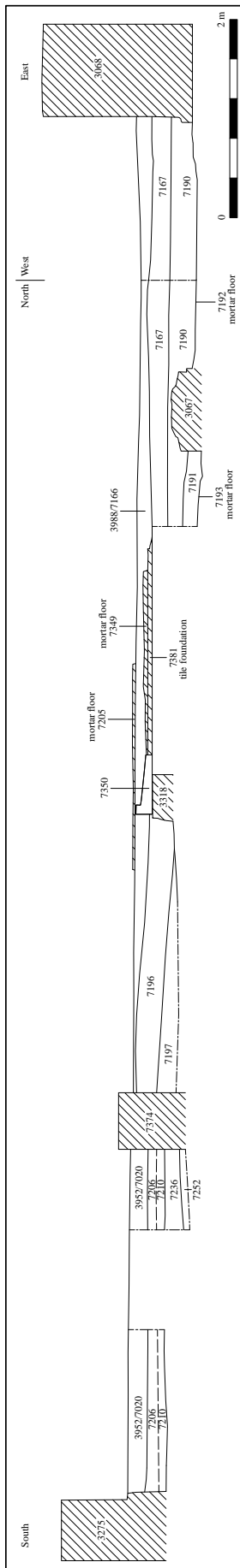


Figure 6.11. East-facing section across the east aisle of the Phase 7 basilica showing levelling layers 3988/7166 and 3952/7020 sealing the remains of the earlier domus. See Fig. 6.10 for location

(Fig. 6.10). As in the nave and sanctuary, a levelling deposit of greenish-grey clay silt (3208/3335/3968) had been spread across the space following the construction of the basilica, sealing the line of the earlier southern wall of the apsidal hall (3067). A layer of mortar (3057) had then been spread over this to form either the floor of the room or a foundation for a tile or stone pavement that had subsequently been robbed in antiquity. Indications from the eastern side of the aisle, where the level of the surviving mortar was found to stop 80 mm below the top of the edging stones located between the northern piers 3077 and 3078, seem to suggest the floor of the aisle was slightly lower than these stones, implying that the edging stones formed a slight step between the aisle and the nave. Although dating evidence was limited, a fragment of the collar rim of a cooking pot dating to the late 5th to early 6th century was found in layer 3968.

In the east aisle a similar mid-greenish-brown silty clay (3988/7166) was initially spread across the northern half of the room, sealing the remains of the eastern end of the north portico as well as the threshold (7350) and associated mortar floor (7349) of the room directly behind the portico (Fig. 6.11).⁵ Mixed within this deposit was a large amount of broken tile, some of which appeared to have been purposely laid flat. Across the centre and western side of the room patches of a creamy-white mortar (7205) were preserved overlying 3988/7166. Again this either formed the actual surface level of the aisle or was the base for a possible tile or stone pavement. As with the western aisle, dating evidence was limited but a sherd of LRA 2 dating to the 6th (or 5th) century was found in layer 3988, along with two thicker LRA 2 sherds dating to the 5th century in layer 7166.

The aisles seem to have been divided into two discrete areas as towards the southern end of both, the stylobate wall of the north portico of the earlier domus (7374) appears to have remained visible, running across the width of the aisles at floor level (Fig. 6.12). The builders of the basilica appear to have deliberately integrated this earlier wall into the new design, since excavations in the east aisle revealed that the stylobate had been incorporated into the eastern arcade of the basilica. The foundation wall running between piers 3284 and 3286 had been built either side of the earlier wall (Fig. 6.13), and the eastern wall of the aisle had been built over it (Fig. 6.14). Infilling the eastern bay was a greenish-brown levelling deposit (3952/7020) containing abundant broken tile fragments (see Fig. 6.11). No surviving floor surface was located but it seems likely it would have been of either stone or tile.

This distinction in the form of the southern ends of the aisles may suggest these spaces were used in a different way to the rest of the aisle, perhaps forming a crude transept. In the west aisle, a door (1.22 m wide) was located in the southwest corner of the bay. As this led out to the courtyard of the earlier peristyle house, it may have been used by the clergy as a means of entering the basilica, thereby separating themselves from their congregation.⁶

Towards the northern end of the east aisle was a further room (see Fig. 6.10). Accessed by a door incorporated into the eastern wall of the aisle, this small room (3.15 × 3.15 m) had formerly been the entrance vestibule of the Phase 1 Building 8 before it was changed into a separate room following the construction of wall 3776 in Phase 3a (see Chapters 3 and 4). Benches, where individuals could sit before being allowed into the room, appear to have been positioned on either side of the entrance. These benches utilised the demolished remains of wall 7393, together with the blockings 7369, 7370 and 7383, as their foundations were deliberately retained as part of the new building extending 0.35 m out from the inner face of wall 3089/3299 (Fig. 6.15).

Due to damage, both the southern and eastern walls of the room (3776 and 7029) were partially demolished and replaced by two new walls (7394 and 3777). The eastern end of wall 7394 had been built behind wall 7041, the northern side wall of the eastern entrance of the earlier domus. Unlike the earlier wall



Figure 6.12. Aerial view of the Phase 7 basilica showing the earlier domus stylobate wall 7374 running across the aisles



Figure 6.13. Detail of wall 7374 incorporated into the arcade of the east aisle



Figure 6.14. Detail of wall 7374 beneath the eastern wall of the basilica 3299 (1 m scale)



Figure 6.15. The demolished remains of wall 7393 and blockings 7369, 7370 and 7383 used as the foundation of benches



Figure 6.16. View of the southern wall of the small room located off the east aisle showing its various phases of construction

3776, the construction of wall 7394 was slightly different as it contained a noticeable amount of tile/brick within its build, the limestone blocks were more angular, and the pinkish mortar that was used contained more grit and shell inclusions within it (Fig. 6.16). The new eastern wall of the room (3777) was 0.86 m wide and had been partially built over the line of wall 7029. Incorporated into the western face of the wall was a small niche (0.93 × 0.58 m wide), the base of which had been lined with tiles (Fig. 6.17). Positioned opposite the doorway, this either formed a sill for a window to light the room or was a cupboard, perhaps for the placement of liturgical vestments.⁷ The western end of wall 3775 was also repaired at this time as it seems it had been damaged during the construction of the eastern wall of the basilica.

Internally, six post-holes were located towards the northwest corner of the room (3807, 3916, 3914, 3923, 3930 and 3805). Cut through the earlier mortar surface 3911, these are thought to mark the position of scaffolding poles set up as part of these repairs (Fig. 6.18). Associated with the cuts were seven almost complete tiles (3918). Infilling areas where 3911 had been damaged, these tiles

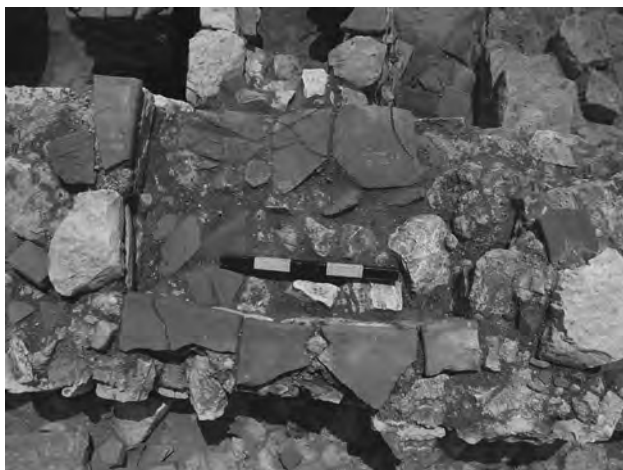


Figure 6.17. Detail of the niche in wall 3777 (50 cm scale)

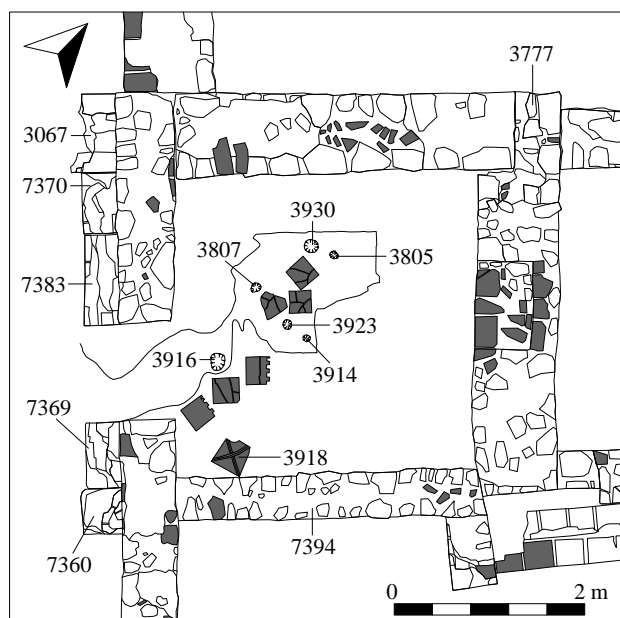


Figure 6.18. Plan of the small room located off the east aisle showing the Phase 7 features associated with the repairs to the room

would have formed pads to support parts of the scaffolding (Fig. 6.19). Along with one that had a hand-swiped cross on it, two of the tiles had denticulated mouldings on their edges (Fig. 6.20). As these decorated tiles are thought originally to have been part of an ornamental lintel located above the eastern doorway of the Phase 3 *domus* (see Chapter 4), their reuse seems to suggest this doorway had been demolished prior to the construction of the basilica.⁸

Once the new walls were constructed and the scaffolding removed, a dark-grey silty clay (3337) (80–100 mm thick) was spread across the room. As well as fragments of limestone and tile and charcoal flecks, numerous *tesserae* pieces from the damaged floor of the earlier room were found mixed throughout the deposit. A fragment of a

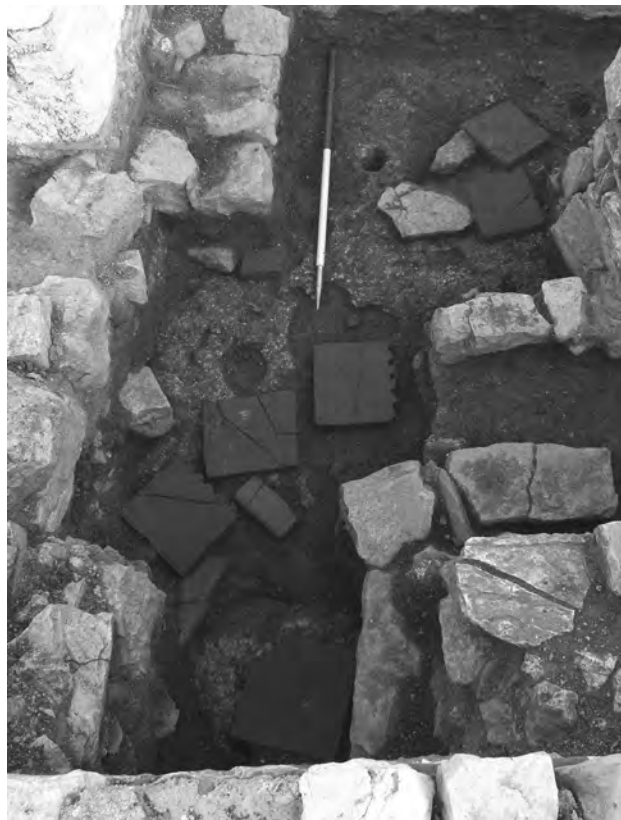


Figure 6.19. View of the post-holes and tile post-pads associated with the repair of the small room located off the east aisle (1 m scale)



Figure 6.20. Detail of the two tile post-pads (3918) with denticulated mouldings. These decorated tiles are thought to have originally been part of an ornamental lintel located above the eastern doorway of the Phase 3 *domus* (50 cm scale)

marble door surround (SF 6203), possibly from one of the doors of the earlier room was also found. Along with these, nine coins ranging in date from the mid-4th to the late 5th century were recovered (SFs 6017/Cat. 367, 6161/Cat. 302, 6166/Cat. 251, 6182/Cat. 165, 6184/Cat. 153, 6188/Cat. 116, 6198/Cat. 112, 6199/Cat. 368 and 6290/

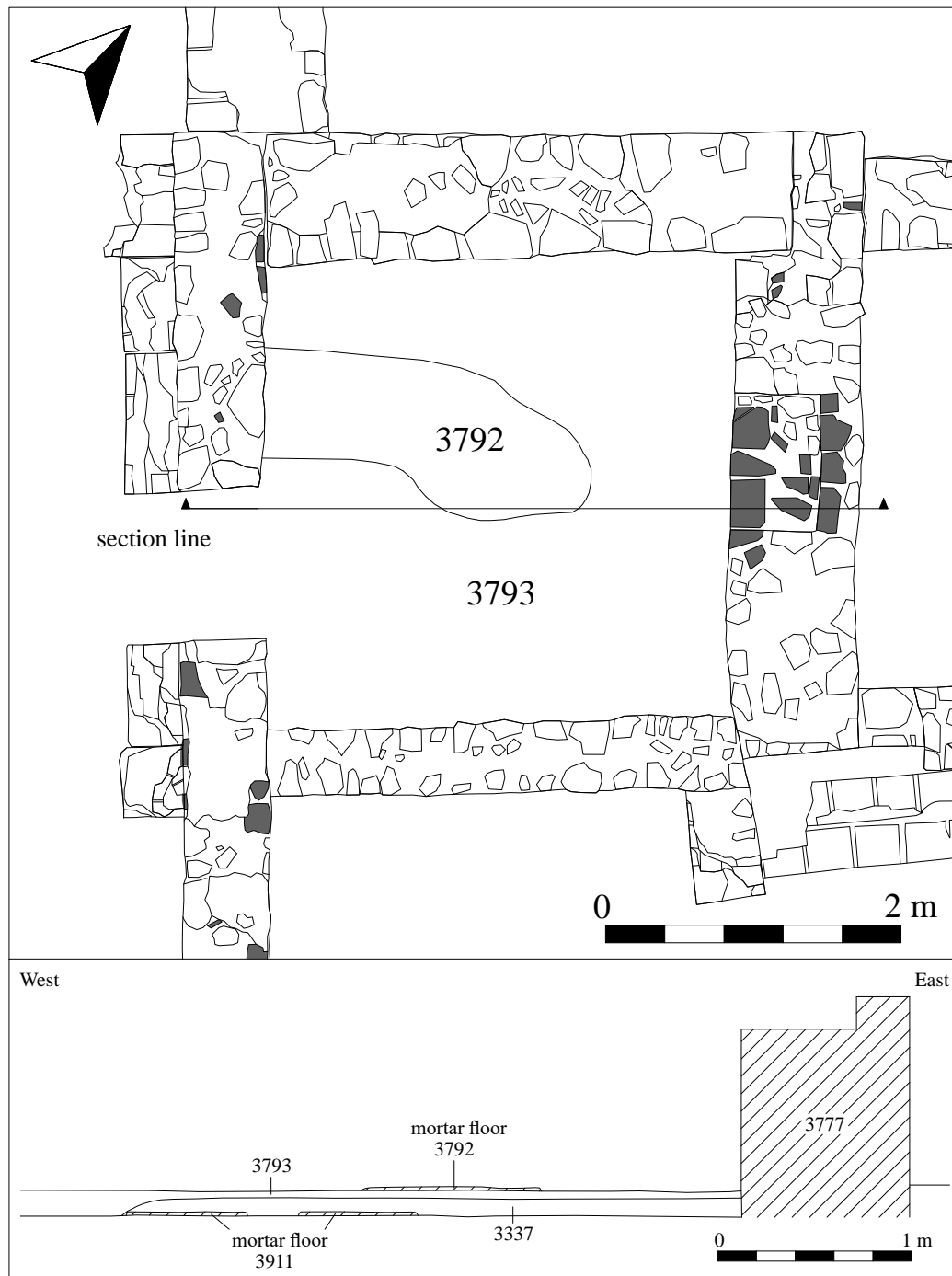


Figure 6.21. Plan and section of the small room located off the east aisle showing the Phase 7 levelling and floor following the completion of the repairs

Cat. 110).⁹ These dates are corroborated by the ceramics that covered a similar date range (see Volume 6.3, Chapter 5). Covering 3337 was a compact layer of mid-greenish-brown clay (3793). Varying between 30–130 mm thick, 3793 acted as a make-up layer for a thin mortar spread (3792) (Fig. 6.21).¹⁰ Although badly damaged, surviving only as a strip towards the southwest corner of the room, 3792 is thought to be the contemporary surface of the room associated with the basilica.

While finds associated with the establishment of the

basilica were limited, a large amount of window glass was recovered from the deposits that built up after the church was abandoned. Along with natural light, the interior of the church was illuminated by lamps, as indicated by fragments of a number of small glass hanging lamps found in the eastern aisle (SFs 6153 and 6277) (Fig. 6.22). Bronze/metal lamps may also have been used within the building. Although no such lamps were recovered, a complete copper alloy suspension chain potentially for such a lamp was found just to the west of the basilica (SF 5157) (Fig. 6.23).

The apsidal hall

As part of the construction of the basilica the apsidal hall underwent a major alteration. Along with the removal of the southern wall, a series of internal partition walls (walls 3051, 3055, 3127, 3091, 3070 and 3083) (0.70 m wide) was constructed across the length and width of the earlier building, dividing it into three separate chambers (Fig. 6.24).

The narthex

The largest chamber was the central space (Fig. 6.25). Measuring 15.65 m in length and varying in width from 5.77 m to 5.94 m, this space became the narthex of the new church. Covering the floor was a flagstone pavement (3042) of rectangular and square limestone slabs (Fig. 6.26). A number of the slabs had various cuts and grooves

on them, suggesting these were *spolia*, possibly reused from a paved late Republican or early Imperial monumental area at Butrint. One slab even had the settings of four letters from a monumental bronze inscription (Fig. 6.27).¹¹ The size of the slabs varied, the largest and most complete being



Figure 6.22. Fragment of a small glass hanging lamp found in the east aisle

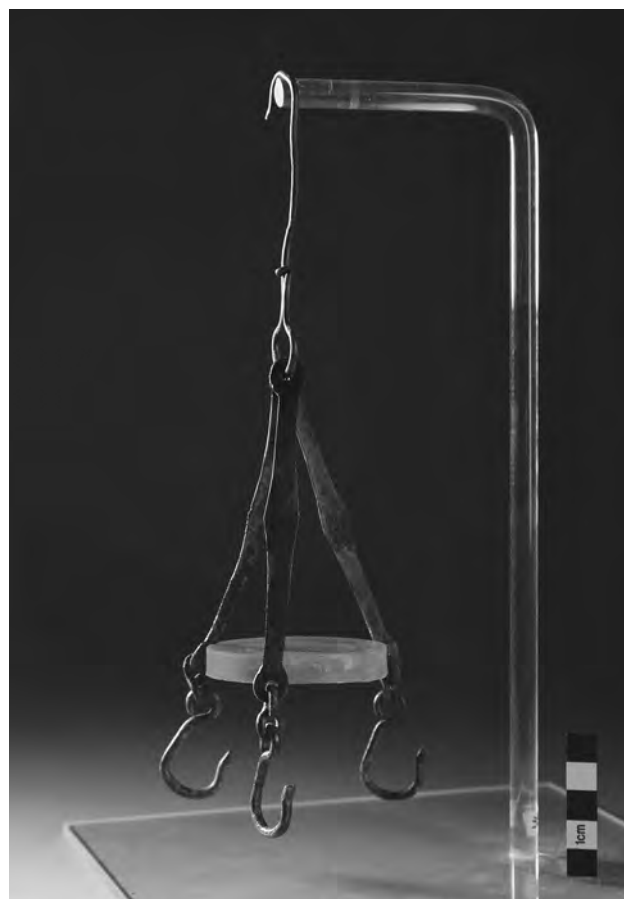


Figure 6.23. Bronze lamp chain



Figure 6.24. The Phase 7 basilica, looking east, showing the divided apsidal hall of the earlier domus



Figure 6.25. Plan of the narthex of the Phase 7 basilica



Figure 6.26. Aerial view of the narthex and exonarthex of the Phase 7 basilica. The square masonry pier bases visible relate to Phase 8

reserved for the central area immediately in front of the main door into the nave. The slabs were slightly smaller in size to the west, while to the east the floor was made up of broken and irregular sections of paving. This distinction in the flooring appears to have been deliberate and may indicate the relative value and status associated with the various parts of the basilica and its users: regular slabs laid in front of the nave and used by the clergy, smaller, irregular fragments in the areas giving access to the two side aisles used by the congregation (see Chapter 11).

Set within the new floor, directly in front of the main entrance into the nave, was a tomb (3262) (Fig. 6.28). Measuring 2.75×1.40 m, the edges of the grave had been lined with roughly squared limestone blocks (3261). Three



Figure 6.27. Detail of the inscription reused within the pavement of the Phase 7 narthex (20 cm scale)

large capstones, of which only the northern stone remains, sealed the grave. At the southern end of the grave, a slightly thicker slab had been incorporated into the floor of 3042, creating a small step in front of the nave's threshold stone 3104. Covering the base of the grave was a layer of mortar,



Figure 6.28. Tomb 3262 in the narthex located directly in front of the door to the nave

which had either been laid specifically for the grave due to the damp conditions, or was the reused floor surface of one of the earlier buildings located in this area. Although the grave had been robbed in antiquity and the body removed, the significance of its position, directly in front of the main entrance to the basilica, suggests this was the grave of an important individual, possibly the principal benefactor of the church.

The paving did not extend into the apse of the earlier hall as this space was completely closed off by the construction of a substantial wall (3092) (0.93 m wide). The western side of the wall was constructed of large, sub-angular limestone blocks while the eastern inner edge was of tile (see Fig. 6.25). Covering the tile was a layer of hydraulic plaster (30 mm thick), which suggests this space was now used as a tank/cistern to hold water. The earlier mortar foundation of the Phase 3a apse formed the floor of the structure, the level of which was now 0.30 m below that of the narthex (Fig. 6.29).¹²

The exonarthex

The northern chamber (measuring c. 15.50 m in length by 3.22 m wide) became the exonarthex and was accessed by a new triple doorway inserted into the north wall of the former hall (Figs 6.30 and 6.31). This doorway seems to have been the main entrance into the basilica as the western entrance of the earlier hall was blocked-in by wall 2110. From the exonarthex another triple doorway incorporated in wall 3055 led into the narthex, the central door of which was axially aligned with the main entrance into the nave.

Fronting the new entrance was a courtyard constructed over the former rooms located along this side of the hall (see Fig. 6.31). Wall 1165 was retained and became the western side of the courtyard, while to the north a new right-angled wall was built (1180/3813), the northern side of which was partially built over

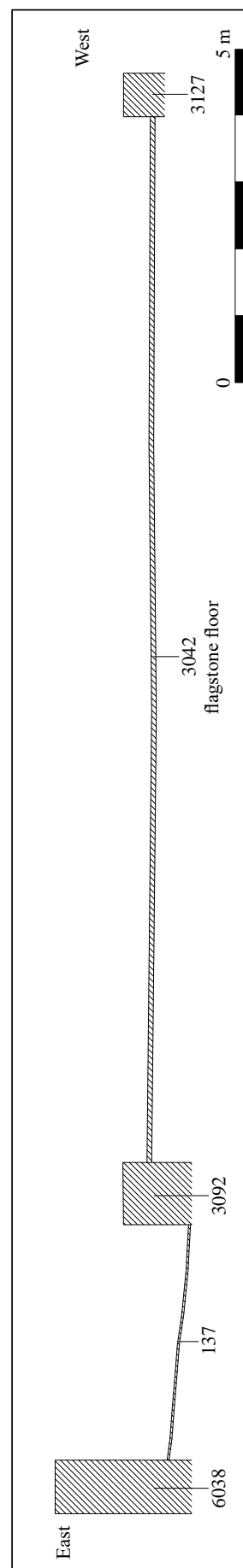


Figure 6.29. East-west profile through the nave



Figure 6.30. The Phase 7 basilica, looking south, showing the main entrance of the new building

the line of the walls 3816 and 3311, indicating that these earlier walls had been removed prior to its construction.¹³ As part of these alterations, the water feature 7389, located in the centre of the earlier eastern room, was dismantled and the stones from its walls dumped within the void of the structure (7396). Following this, the area was levelled over (7322) and a floor (3304) of irregular-shaped limestone slabs (varying in size from $0.60 \times 0.40 \times 0.06$ m to $0.25 \times 0.20 \times 0.06$ m) and tile pieces was laid across the area (Fig. 6.32). Incorporated into the floor were the demolished remains of wall 3311.

Elements of a similar rough-paved floor (7395) were also located in the exonarthex, the level of which matched that of the base of the northern entrance and the courtyard beyond. Much of this surface had been removed in antiquity, with the only surviving part of it fronting the doorway (Fig. 6.33). Underlying the floor was a series of

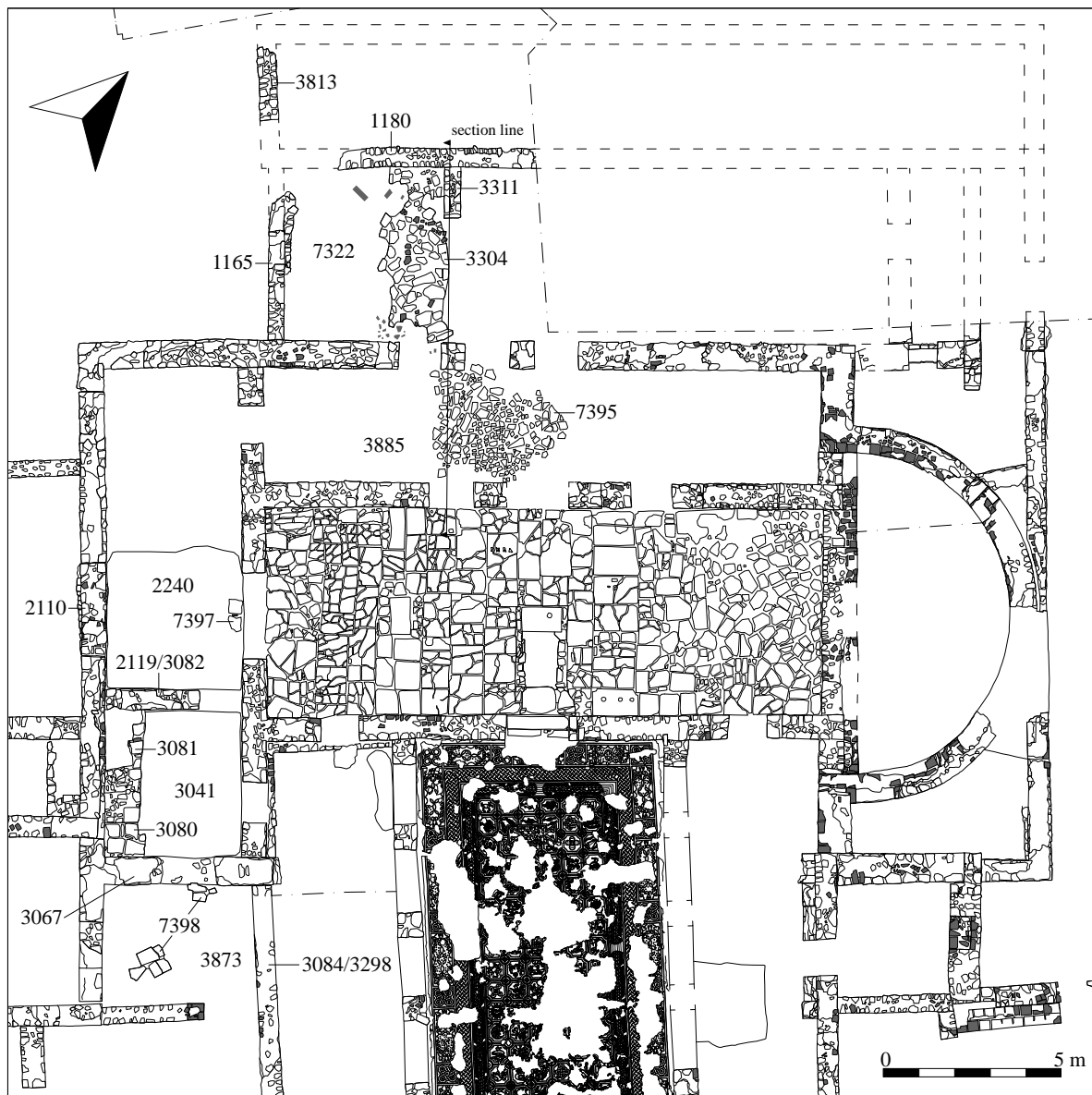


Figure 6.31. Plan of the exonarthex, northern courtyard and western chamber



Figure 6.32. Paving 3304 in the northern courtyard fronting the main entrance of the Phase 7 basilica (1 m scale)

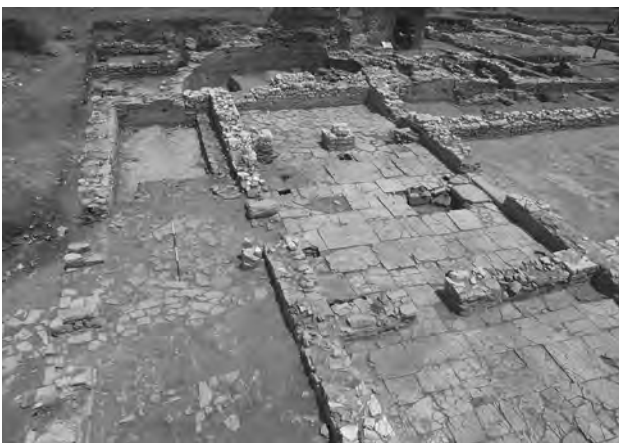


Figure 6.33. Paving 7395 in the exonarthex (2 m scale)

make-up deposits (3886 and 3885) that raised the level of this room by c. 0.40 m (Fig. 6.34). Ceramics recovered from these deposits date from the late 5th to early 6th century.¹⁴

The western chamber

This chamber (measuring 13.67 m in length by 3.82 m wide) extended across the width of the earlier hall and could be accessed from both the narthex and exonarthex through doors in its eastern wall (see Fig. 6.31). A third door, at the southern end of the chamber, initially allowed access to the west aisle although this was subsequently blocked by wall 3098 (possibly in Phase 8).

An east–west-aligned wall (2119/3082) (2.70 × 0.52 m) located towards the southern end of the chamber divided the room in two, with a doorway (1.20 m wide) at the eastern end of the wall. The northern room was the larger of the two (c. 9.10 m in length). Despite later alterations, traces of a greyish-white mortar (2240) containing very small pebbles and occasional ceramic inclusions was observed towards the centre of the room. This mortar had been laid following the blocking of the original entrance to the apsidal hall, the mortar partially covering the offset foundation of the blocking wall 2110. A stone slab floor (7397) had then been bedded onto the mortar. Although this

floor had been almost completely robbed away, two slabs of the original floor surface were found *in situ* directly in front of the door to the narthex (Fig. 6.35).

Remnants of a similar flagstone surface (3080), set above a yellowish mortar bedding layer (3041), were also revealed in the southern room. Levels taken on 3080 indicate this floor was almost 0.30 m higher than that of the northern room, suggesting a step must have been located in the doorway between the two rooms. In the southwest corner of this room was a rectangular masonry structure (3081) (3.12 × 0.94 m). Built against the eastern face of wall 7372 and screened by wall 2119/3082, this appears to be the lower part of a stair block, implying the chamber had an upper floor (Fig. 6.36). Constructed around a heavily mortared rubble core and roughly faced, the southeastern corner of the structure was formed from a reused rectangular base. A gap 0.96 m wide existed between the edge of the masonry block and wall 3067, allowing access to the first step. Unfortunately, due to extensive robbing none of the steps survives so it is unclear how steep the staircase was.

Along the southern side of this room a new door (1.50 m wide) was cut through wall 3067 (see Fig. 6.31). This led into a small room (varying in size between 3.46–3.26 m north–south by 4.36–4.12 m east–west) which had formerly been the western of the two flanking rooms along the southern side of the apsidal hall (see Chapter 4). The western wall of the basilica (3084/3298) had cut the room in two and now formed the eastern wall of the new room. Internally, following the removal of the earlier mosaic floor 3900, a yellow mortar (3897) (80 mm thick), possibly waste from the construction of wall 3084/3298, built up over the eastern side of the room. Sealing this was a thick, mid-brown silty clay levelling deposit (3873) containing frequent large, angular limestone fragments and tile along with occasional patches of mortar. This deposit raised the level of the room by 0.30 m and contained ceramics dating to the mid- to late 5th century. Amongst the ceramics recovered was an unusual amount of deliberately broken-off amphorae spikes (for a discussion of these and illustrations see Volume 6.3,

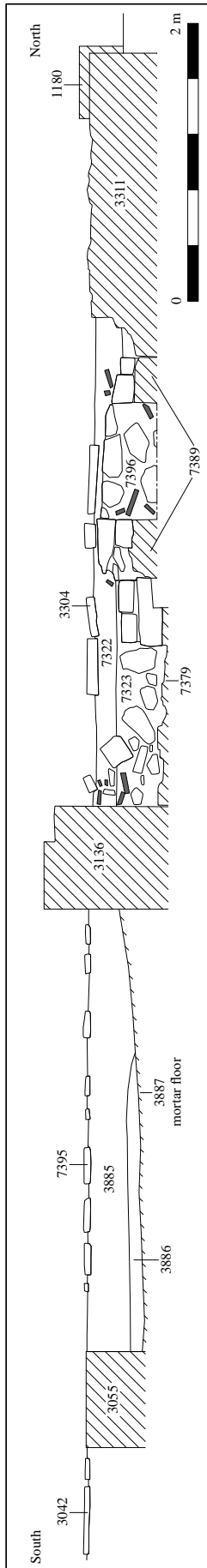


Figure 6.34. East-facing section through the narthex and exonarthex showing the Phase 7 levelling deposits. See Fig. 6.31 for location



Figure 6.35. The western chamber, looking north. The wall running across the room in the background together with the broken column relate to Phase 11 (1 m scale)



Figure 6.36. Detail of the column base reused in the staircase foundation 3081 (1 m scale)

Chapter 5). Overlying 3873 was a flagstone pavement (7398), much of which had been robbed in antiquity (Fig. 6.37). The level of this floor matched that of floor 3080, suggesting floor 7398 was an extension of this, especially as one of the surviving slabs of 7398 partially covered the base of the doorway connecting the two rooms.

To the south the door to the north portico remained open, although it was slightly narrowed as wall 3084/3298 (the western wall of the basilica) was built across the eastern side of it.

The surrounding area

The foundation of the church does not seem to have been an isolated venture. The entire area surrounding the basilica underwent a form of regeneration in this period (see Fig. 6.1).¹⁵ To the east, the northern rooms of the Phase 2 cistern were



Figure 6.37. Paving 7398 within the room to the south of the western chamber (1 m scale)



Figure 6.38. View of the Phase 2 cistern converted into a bath-house in Phase 7

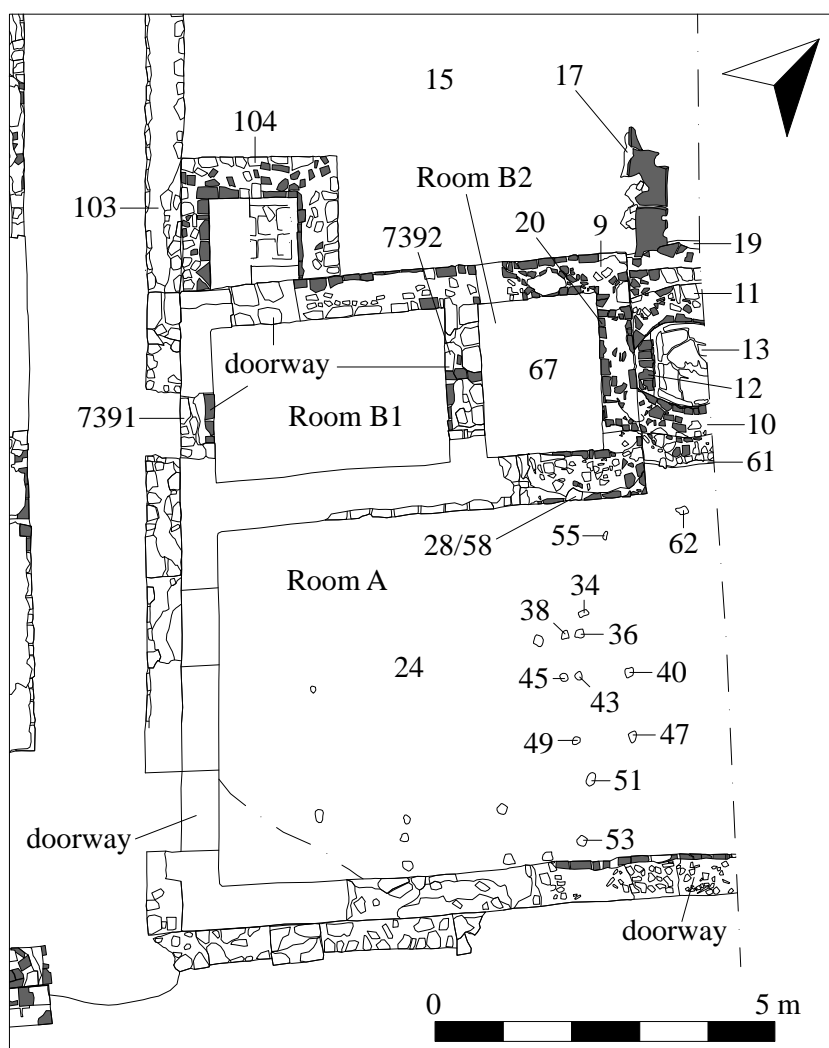


Figure 6.39. The Phase 7 cistern bath-house

converted into a small bath-house complex, while the role of the earlier eastern bath-house was altered. The former eastern entrance to the *domus* was demolished and the rooms of the eastern wing altered. To the west, a series of new rooms was built up against the western side of the

converted apsidal hall, while the western bath-house was deliberately robbed before being covered over following the construction of the basilica. As part of these alterations the porticoes were removed and the central courtyard was levelled over.



Figure 6.40. Detail of the western face of wall 20 showing the centrally placed hypocaust arch



Figure 6.41. Detail of the plunge bath

The new small eastern bath-house

The new bath-house was made up of four rooms, comprising a small oval plunge bath and connected hot room (formed by Room B2) at the eastern end of the complex, a cold room (formed by Room B1) at the western end, and a separate new cold plunge bath built along the northern side of that room (Fig. 6.38). From its size it appears the bath was intended for one individual to bathe at a time, in privacy, unlike the communal bath-houses of the early empire.¹⁶

The hot room measured 1.75×2.25 m internally and was formed by walls 8/9, 28/58 and a new wall (20) built within a gap cut through walls 9 and 58 at the eastern end of the room (Fig. 6.39). Wall 20 was constructed entirely from mortared tiles/bricks and incorporated a centrally placed hypocaust arch (0.60 m high and 0.62 m wide) (Fig. 6.40). In order to allow the hot air to circulate, the floor level of the earlier room was lowered by 0.40 m, exposing the foundations of the surrounding walls. Only the mortar sub-floor (67) of the hot room survives but it would seem from impressions within the mortar that it had originally been paved with large *sesquipedalis* tiles (0.52×0.52 m). At the top of the surviving section of wall 20, 0.35 m above the top of the hypocaust arch, two iron pegs were visible set into the face of the wall. These presumably acted as spacers, suggesting the walls of the room had been covered in marble; this is supported by the discovery of a piece of grey-white marble veneer in a post-abandonment rubble deposit (14) infilling the room.

The plunge bath abutted the eastern face of wall 20. The southern wall of this structure (10) had been built within a foundation trench (61), the southern edge of which had partially cut the demolished eastern end of wall 33. The northern wall of the bath (11) had also been built within a foundation trench (19) that had been cut through the earlier Phase 5 layer 15, a mixed deposit found along the northern side of the former cistern. Both walls were 0.50 m wide and were built of alternating courses of limestone blocks and tiles bonded in the same yellow-pink mortar

as the rest of the rebuilt complex. The walls of the bath had been built on a stepped foundation, the exterior of which appeared much rougher than the rest of the build. Unfortunately the full extent of the plunge bath was not exposed as it continued beyond the eastern limit of the excavation. The *prae-furnium* used to heat the pool and hot room was therefore not revealed as this would have been located at this end of the bath.

The interior of the plunge bath was plastered with a lining of pink mortar (13) some 30–40 mm thick; this also formed the floor and a quarter-round moulding at the junction of walls and floors (Fig. 6.41). A step (12) (0.34 m wide) topped with two layers of five tiles was constructed at the western end of the bath, abutting the eastern face of wall 20. At the base of the northern corner of the step a drain had been built into the side of wall 11. A ceramic *tubulus*, 0.10 m in diameter, was visible exiting through the northern face of the wall, where it connected with a drain (17) made of upturned *imbrices* set in mortar that was observed running northwards for 1.70 m (Fig. 6.42). The drain had a slight slope to it and was found to drop 0.16 m from south to north. It is unclear where the drain carried the waste water as the overlying layer (29) was not fully removed to the north of the area, but as there appears to have been no cover to the drain it is thought these tiles acted as a kind of soak away.

To convert Room B1 into the cold room, the room would initially have been infilled with rubble and earth before a floor of tile/stone was laid, the level of which would have matched that of the floor of the eastern hot room.¹⁷ To the north of Room B1 a new cold plunge bath was built (Fig. 6.43). A door cut through the northern wall of the cistern connected it with the cold room. The walls of the structure (104) were all keyed into each other and were built of varying sizes of rectangular stone blocks. Tile was used to face the interior of the bath, and to form the structure's northeast corner. The walls varied in thickness from 0.55 m on the north and east to 0.37 m on the west, the western side being narrower as it abutted the eastern face of the



Figure 6.42. Drain 17 made up of upturned imbrices extending out from the northern side of the plunge bath

Phase 1 road wall 103. Internally the room measured 1.31 m east–west and 1.28 m north–south. A single step (0.43 m high by 0.29 m wide) permitted access to the plunge bath. The floor of the bath was laid with tiles averaging 0.26 m². These were covered with a layer of hydraulic mortar



Figure 6.43. The cistern bath-house, looking south, showing the cold room 104 built onto the side of the earlier Room B1

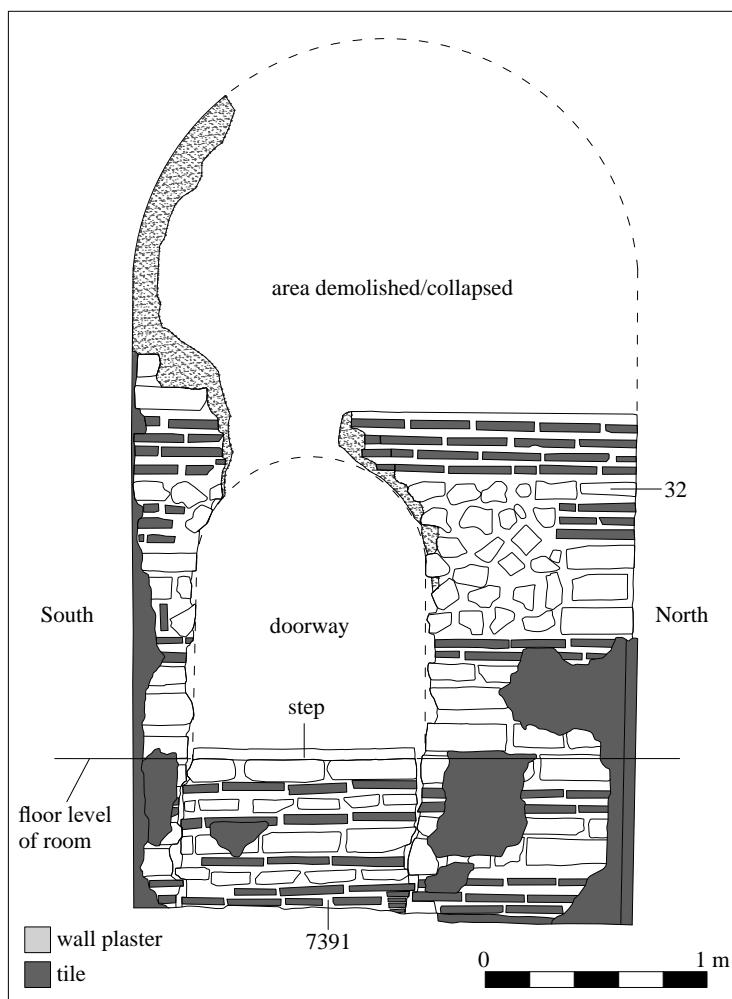


Figure 6.44. The east-facing elevation of wall 32 showing the position of the main doorway into the cistern bath-house cut through blocking wall 7391



Figure 6.45. Plan and interpretation of the post- and stake-holes within Room A

c. 15 mm thick; this also covered the walls and the face of the step, where it was up to 30 mm thick. Quarter-round mouldings secured the junction of the wall and floor and the vertical angles of the step. At the eastern end of the north wall was a hole; lined with a ceramic *tubulus* this formed the drain for the bath, channelling the water away to the north via an exit hole visible on the exterior. Unlike the eastern hot plunge bath, there was no trace of any tile channel connected with this drain.¹⁸

The main access to the bath-house was from the west by a new doorway (1.35 m high by 1.05 m wide) cut through the blocking wall 7391 (Fig. 6.44; see also Fig. 5.26). A second doorway was cut through the blocking wall 7392 at the eastern end of Room B1 to link it to the hot room beyond (see Fig. 5.26). Both these cuts left a visible step within the remaining blocking and indicate the pavement of the cold room was at least 0.70 m above the original floor of the room.

As part of these changes, the southern room of the earlier cistern, Room A, was also altered. The vaulting and supporting piers, which may have been damaged in the intervening period, were removed and a mid-greyish-brown clay layer (24) (0.15 m thick) was spread across the chamber. Mixed within this layer was a large amount of pottery, representing possibly 40 individual vessels, ranging in date from the late 4th/early 5th to the late 5th and early 6th centuries. Other finds from this deposit included a large quantity of glass, together with animal bone and iron fragments, as well as an almost complete knife blade (SF 2348). Two corroded coins (SFs 2347/Cat. 356 and 2349/Cat. 357), dating to 4th/5th century, were also recovered. Twelve small post- or stake-holes (34, 36, 38, 40, 43, 45, 47, 49, 51, 53, 55 and 62) were then cut through this layer (Fig. 6.45).¹⁹ Seven of these (53, 51, 49, 43, 36, 34 and 55) seemed to form a line running north–south across the floor and are likely to represent a partition or subdivision of the room. Excavations carried out in the western half of the room by the Albanian Institute of Archaeology in

2002 revealed a further nine post/stake-holes. It is unclear whether the southern room connected directly with the new northern bath-house; no doorway existed between it and the western cold room while any sign of a door to the hot room has been lost due to the later demolition of the southeast corner of the bath-house. However, the doorway in the southwest corner of the room remained accessible and it is possible that this space may have become an open courtyard or entrance court, possibly doubling as an open-air *frigidarium* or *apodyterium* in which a bather would have relaxed prior to going into the bath itself.

Following the construction of the bath-house, a series of mid-greyish-brown silty clay deposits (16, 124 and 29/108/3921/3922) were spread across the open area to the north of the building, which raised the ground level by almost 0.40 m (Fig. 6.46).²⁰ This levelling also extended along the passageway to the west of the bath-house where, at the southern end (as layer 3929), it continued through a new doorway that had been smashed through the blocking wall 7035 to allow access from the south (Fig. 6.47).²¹ Beyond this, layer 3929 partially extended over the levelled-over eastern approach road beyond (see below). Layer 3929 also extended through the door into Room A of the former cistern and appears to equate to layer 24.²² These levelling deposits contained a range of ceramics including pieces dated to the late 4th and early 5th centuries from layers 16 and 29/108, late 5th century from layer 3921, and late 5th to early 6th century from layers 3929, 29/108 and 3921 (see Volume 6.3, Chapter 5).²³ The coins recovered from these deposits covered a similar range of dates.

Mixed throughout these deposits was a large amount of rubble, much of which is thought to have come from the walls of the southern room of the earlier Phase 3b bath-house. Abandoned since the mid-5th century, this room appears to have been pulled down when the new bath was built; context 3921 was found to cover the southwestern corner of the room (Fig. 6.48).²⁴ Prior to the demolition, the suspended floor in the room was removed and a layer of greenish clay (84)

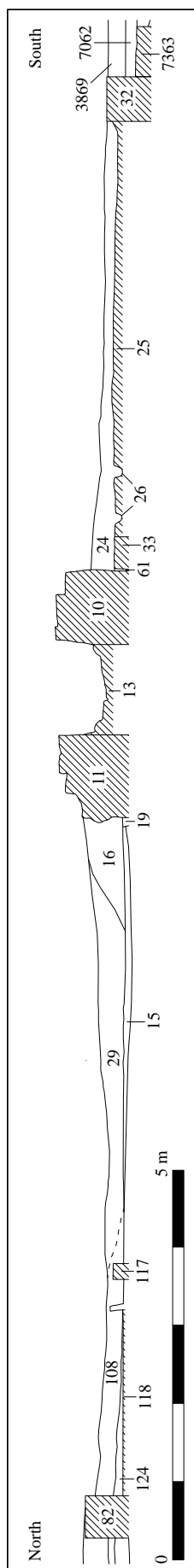


Figure 6.46. West-facing section showing the levelling deposits used to raise the area to the north of the cistern following the construction of the bath-house

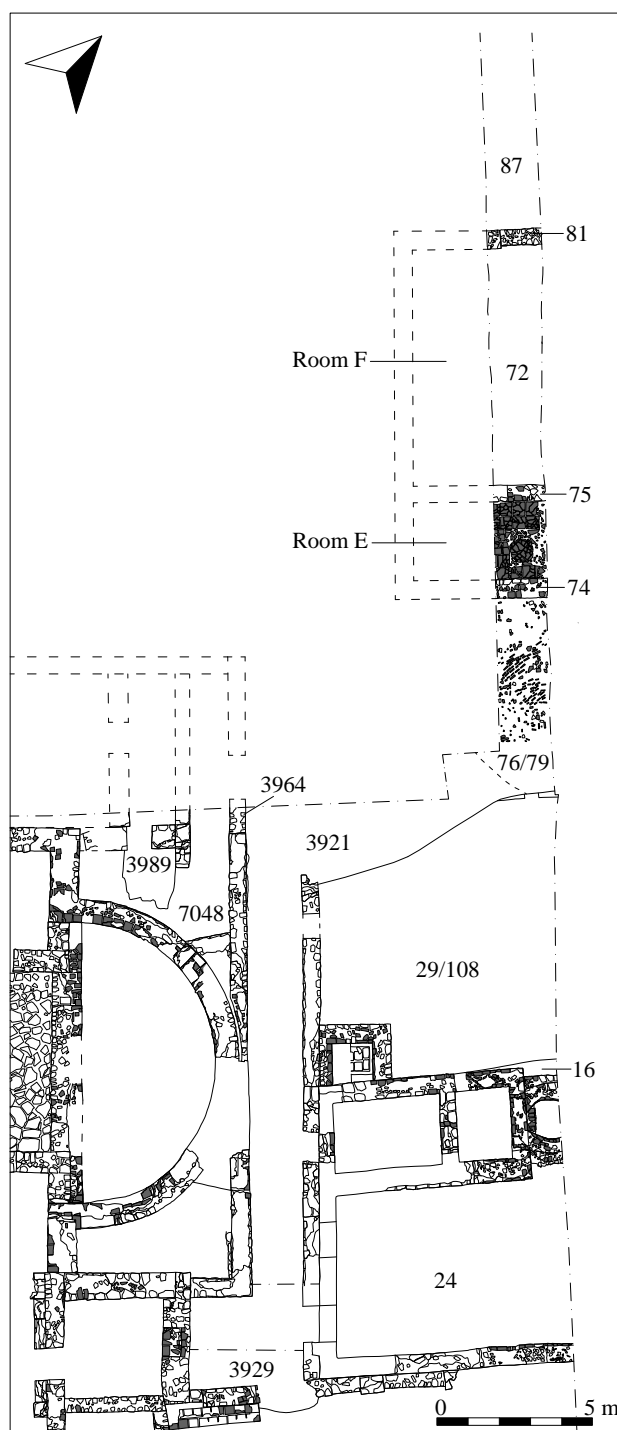


Figure 6.47. The eastern bath-house and surrounding area in Phase 7

(0.26 m thick) was spread across the space (Fig. 6.49; see also Fig. 4.99). This clay sealed the tile sub-floor 85 and is thought to be the original bonding material of the hypocaust *pilae*, which was dumped back into the room following the removal of the actual *pilae* stacks.²⁵ A thin band of wall-plaster (83) had built up over this layer, presumably fallen from the surrounding walls when these were being dismantled. Following this, a light-brown silty clay (76/79) (c. 0.40 m thick) containing numerous fragments of tile, brick, stone and mortar lumps from the dismantled walls, was spread across the room. A large section of walling, possibly the upper part of wall 82, was also found mixed within this deposit (Fig. 6.50). To the south this layer partially sealed the remains of wall 82 and its composition seems to suggest it was a continuation of layer 3921.



Figure 6.48. View of the southwest corner of the eastern bath-house covered by the Phase 7 layer 3921

The northern room of the earlier bath-house (Room G) also seems to have been demolished at this time; wall 98 was dismantled and the suspended floor and tile sub-floor removed. A green clay (88), once more thought to be the bonding material from the *pilae* stacks, was then spread across the area, sealing the foundations of both the sub-floor and wall 98. The room was then levelled over with a layer of yellowy-green clay (87) (0.20 m thick). This deposit, which contained frequent lumps of *cocciopesto* flooring, painted plaster, circular hypocaust stacks and other building rubble from the demolished room, sloped away gently towards the north and seems to have extended to the Vivari Channel.

Despite this, the bath-house was not completely abandoned as there are indications that the two central rooms (Rooms E and F) were reused during this period (see Fig. 6.49). In Room E the original raised floor survived and continued to be used as the main floor of the room. In Room F the original floor had been damaged as the underlying sub-floor of the room had collapsed into a series of voids (see Fig. 4.102).²⁶ Initially, any surviving parts of the floor and tile sub-floor were removed before a rubble layer (78) (0.30 m thick) containing substantial quantities of marble veneer, painted wall-plaster and other decorative elements was spread over the room. A thick layer of broken roof tiles (72) was then dumped over this to form the new floor level of the room. Due to the limited area excavated it is unclear what these rooms were used for at this time but it is possible they may have formed ancillary buildings associated with the establishment of the new basilica. Fragments of Otranto ware retrieved from layer 72 suggests the rooms remained in use for some time.

To the southwest of this building, the space located to the north of the apse was also altered at this time (see Fig. 6.47). The eastern doorway, by which this area had been entered, was narrowed by the insertion of wall 3964. A mortar raft had been laid below the blocking to bond the new wall to the underlying threshold. To the east, layer 3921 covered the base of the blocking, while to the west a thick, dark brownish-black silty clay (7048) was spread across the room, raising its level by 0.34 m (Fig. 6.51). A layer of mortar (3989) (40 mm thick) was then spread over 7048 to form the foundation for a possible tile or stone pavement that was subsequently robbed. The new floor seems to have continued through the doorway in wall 7030, implying the former eastern rooms along the north side of the apsidal hall remained in use during this period. Assuming these rooms were connected by doorways, it is possible these eastern rooms now formed one of the main routes by which the courtyard fronting the main entrance of the basilica was accessed.

Overall, the need to provide access to the new basilica may partially explain why the northeast corner of the site was altered. The removal of the southern room of the earlier bath-house opened up this area, allowing a clear access route to the basilica's entrance from the east. This may have been important as excavations around the Monument have revealed a small apsidal building that is thought to be a contemporary chapel (see Chapter 9) and it seems likely that by opening up this northeast corner, the basilica and chapel would have been directly accessible from one another (Fig. 6.52).

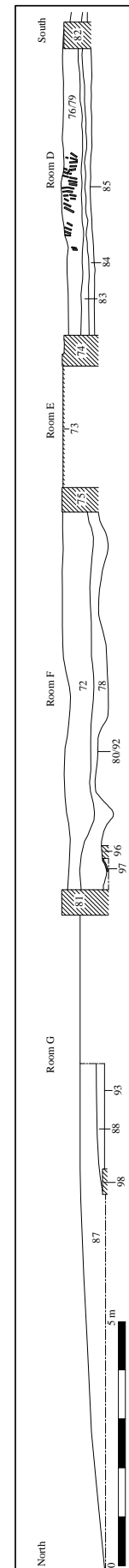


Figure 6.49. West-facing section across the rooms of the eastern bath-house in Phase 7



Figure 6.50. Detail of the collapsed upper part of wall 82 within layer 76/79 (1.60 m scale)

The east portico and east entrance

Prior to the construction of the basilica, the east wing of the former house underwent a number of changes. The colonnade and roof of the surrounding portico were removed and wall 7043, at the northern end of the portico, was dismantled. The ornamental doorway which had formed the main eastern entrance to the Phase 3 and Phase 5 house was also dismantled.

As part of this alteration, a new drain (7027) was built just to the south of the partially dismantled wall 7043 (Fig. 6.53). Cut through mosaic 3838 and running diagonally across the portico, the drain was made up of a series of mid-5th-century North African *spatheion* amphora (Keay 26(F)/Bonifay *Spatheion* 1 forms) (Fig. 6.54). The toes of the amphorae had been broken off to allow the water to drain through them. Where the drain abutted the southern side wall of the eastern doorway (7042), a cut had been made to form an outlet for the drain. A tile and stone capping (7279) had then been placed over the cut, the southern edge of which had been bonded against wall 3602. Beyond this, the drain extended 2.70 m to the east and truncated the southern edge of bench 3983. The western end of the drain was not revealed but it is assumed it originally connected to a down pipe coming off the roof of the basilica.

Following the construction of the basilica, and presumably due to the continuing problem of rising ground water, the entire length of the former east portico was infilled by a mid- to dark olive-green gritty clay (0.10–0.30 m thick). To the south it was excavated as 7403/7076 while

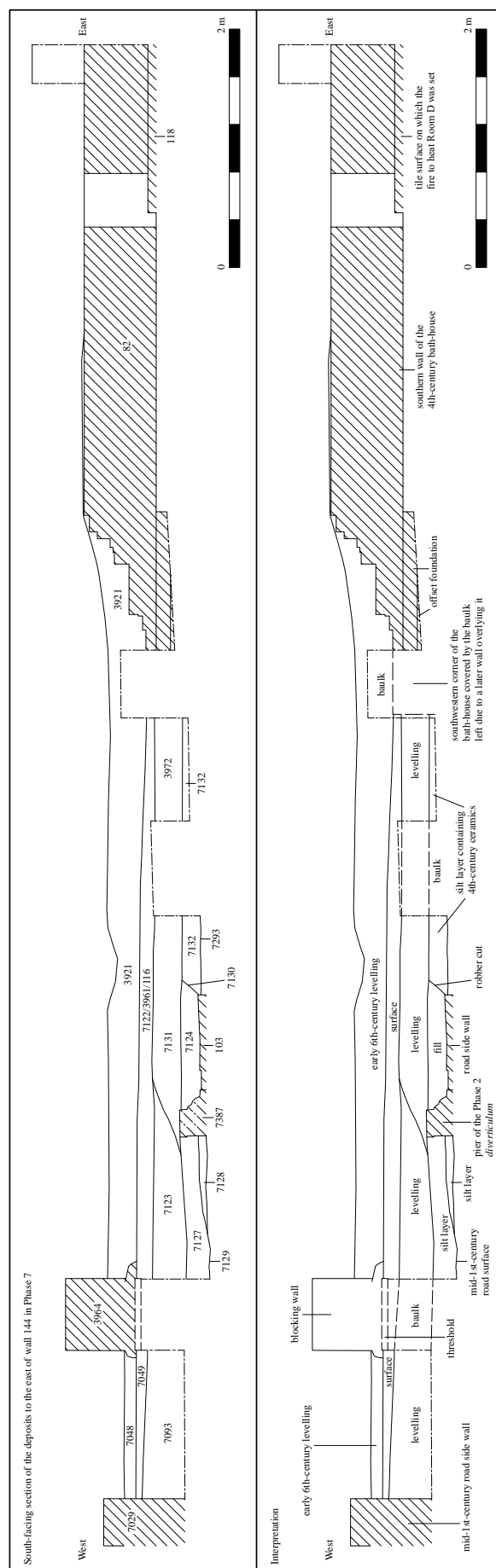


Figure 6.51. South-facing section of the Phase 7 features and deposits in the area between the western side of the Phase 3b eastern bath-house and apse of the apsidal hall

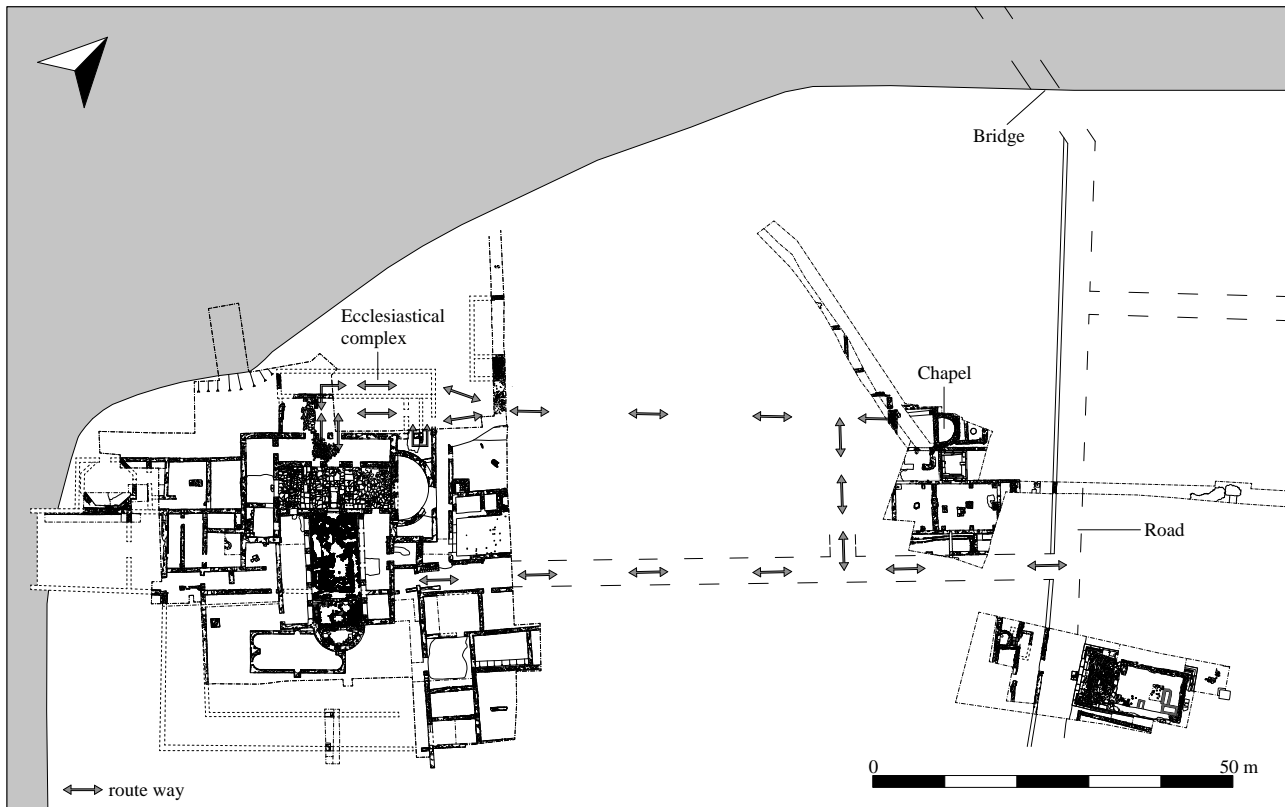


Figure 6.52. Plan of the possible access routes to the basilica and house from the eastern valley road

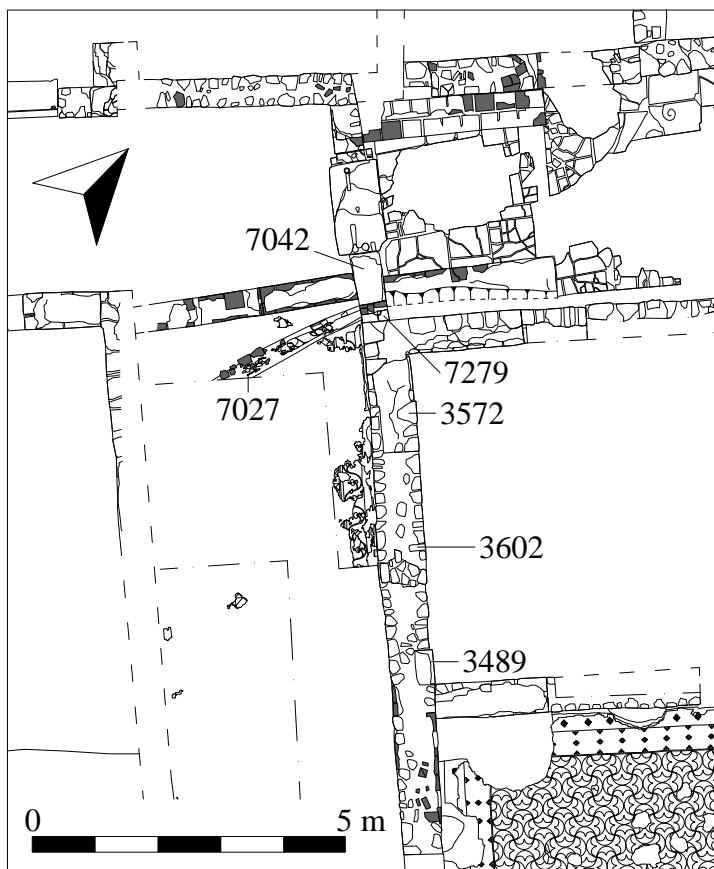


Figure 6.53. Plan of amphorae drain 7027 at the northern end of the east portico

to the north as 3969/7088 (Fig. 6.55a).²⁷ As well as covering the portico, layer 3969 also continued through the doorway in wall 7043 and extended across the northeast corner of the peristyle, where it equates to layer 3928. Banking-up against the external face of the east wall of the basilica, this layer (3928) extended through the dismantled east doorway of the former *domus*, sealing the threshold stone 3981 and (as layer 7062) covering the eastern approach road beyond. This road remained accessible during this period, linking the basilica to the bridge road to the east. Along the northern side of the road, layer 7062 sealed the remains of pier 150 and associated blocking walls 3063 and 7363 located either side of it. These were removed to allow access to a new door that had been cut through the wall of the southern chamber of the cistern, directly behind these demolished structures.

A second olive-green clay levelling layer (3869) (0.30–0.40 m thick) was then spread over these layers to form the contemporary surface associated with the basilica (Figs 6.55b and 6.56). Covering the road, the remains of piers 7359 and 3064, and partially tipping through the door cut through the blocking wall 7035, layer 3869 continued through the eastern doorway of the former *domus* and across the



Figure 6.54. Amphorae drain 7027 at the northern end of the east portico (50 cm scale)

northern end of the east portico; here the level of it matched the tops of the demolished walls 7043 and 7042. It also (as layer 7084) partially covered the tile course running through wall 3602. Unlike the underlying deposit, 3869 contained noticeably more demolition rubble throughout. Mixed in with this rubble were a number of fragments of decorated tile from the ornamental lintel that had originally decorated the eastern doorway of the earlier house.²⁸ This second levelling deposit ran the full length of the portico, as a similar olive-green clay layer (3712/7082) was revealed at the southern end of the space. Along the eastern edge, layer 7082 extended through the doorway into Room 3 (see Fig. 6.55b), sealing the threshold stone and partially covering layer 3496, a contemporary levelling deposit used to raise the level of the room (see below). To the west, layer 3712 extended over the demolished eastern stylobate foundation wall 3850 and continued into the courtyard as layer 3330 (see below).

As well as containing ceramics ranging from the 1st to 3rd century, fragments of 5th- and early 6th-century ceramics were recovered from these two levelling deposits.²⁹ The 5th-century ceramics included fragments of a rim (in layer 3928) and the base and handle (in layer 7062) of a broken *spatheion* amphora, similar to those forming the drain 7027 (see above). The coins from these deposits cover a similar period, with the latest, from layers 3928 and 3712 (SF 6282/Cat. 316 and SF 6131/Cat. 446 respectively), dating to the 5th or 6th century.

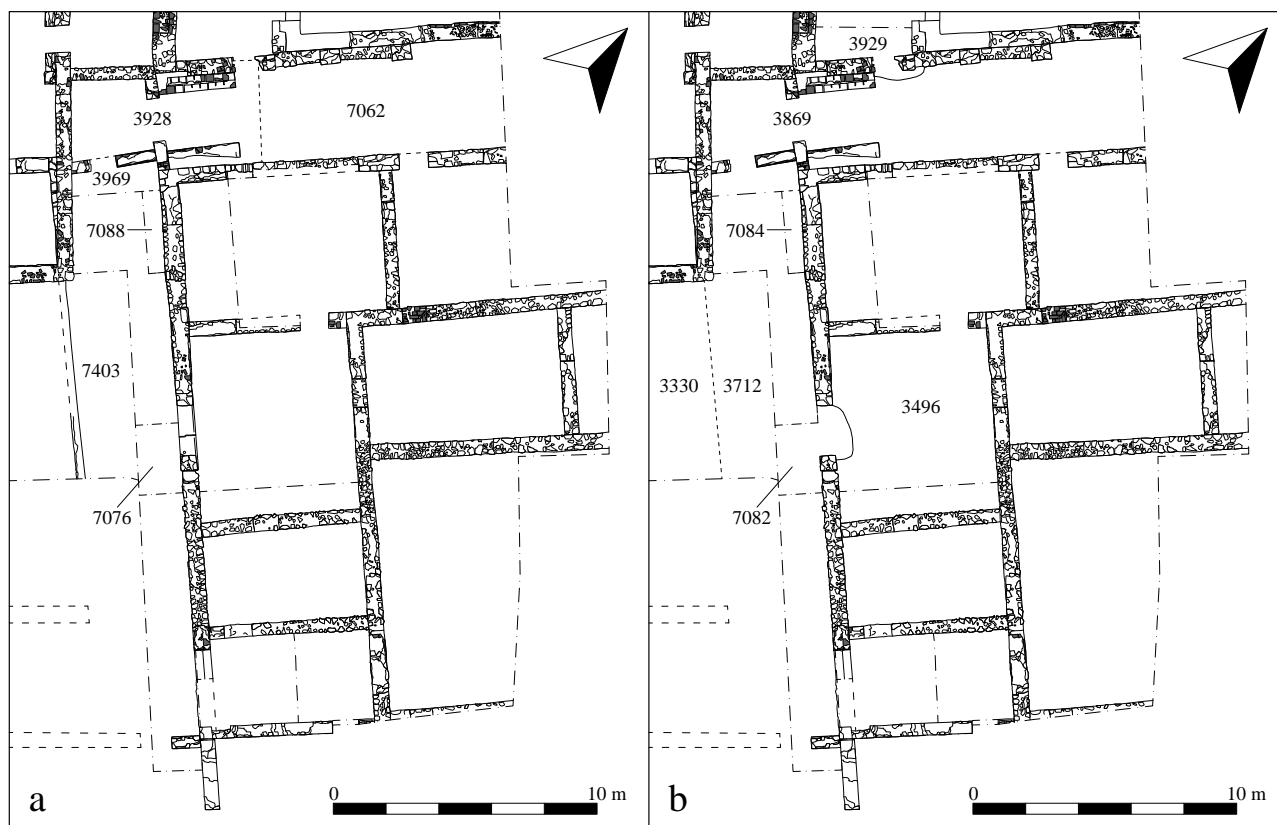


Figure 6.55. Plan of the Phase 7 levelling across the former east portico and eastern approach road

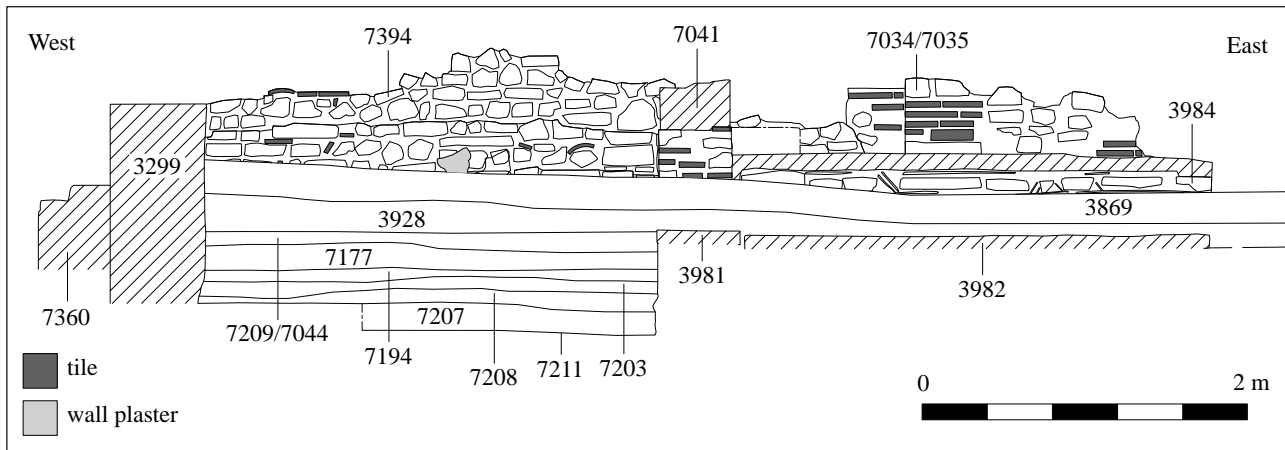


Figure 6.56. South-facing section through the former eastern entrance of the domus showing the Phase 7 levelling 3928 and 3869

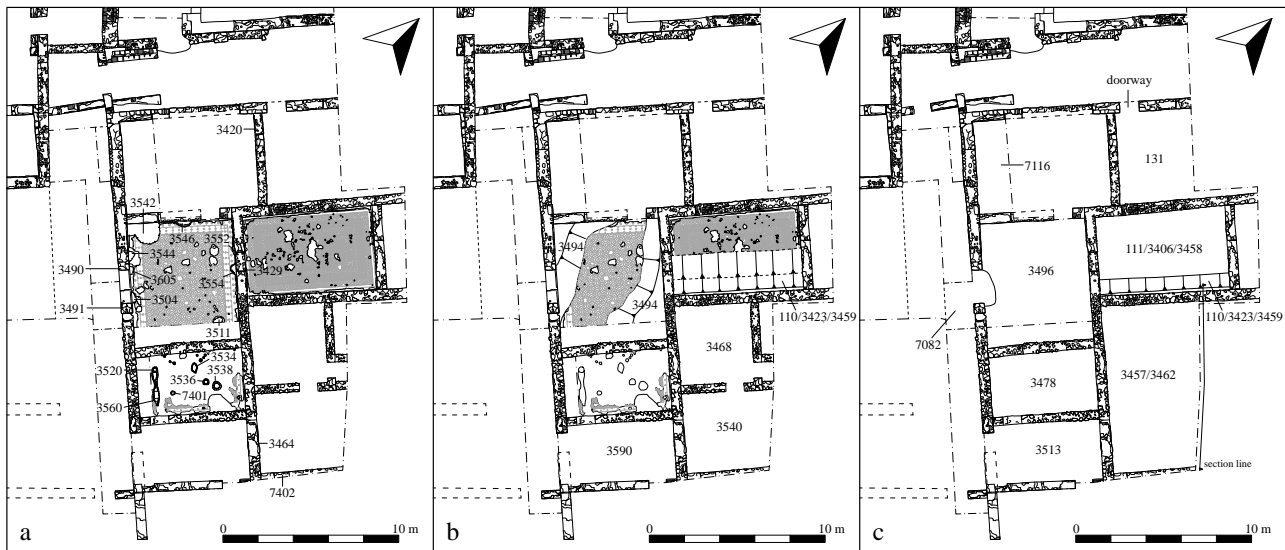


Figure 6.57. The east wing in Phase 7 showing the stages of alterations and levelling undertaken within the various rooms

The east wing

These rooms remained in use during this period, although internal changes were made (Fig. 6.57a–c). The doorway between Room 1 and Room 2 was blocked with wall 3420. A 0.80 m thick dark greyish-brown silty clay (131), containing a large amount of demolition debris, presumably from the walls removed to allow for the construction of the new basilica, was then spread across Room 1. This layer contained a mixed ceramic assemblage including residual 3rd- to 5th-century pieces along with late 5th/6th-century material. In order to access this room, a new door was cut through the western end of blocking wall 132/3066, reopening access to the road to the north.

The new blocking wall (3420) in the western door meant Room 2 could now only be accessed from Room 3. In Room 3 the western doorway to the now levelled-over portico was maintained, although it was narrowed by the construction of two square blocking walls (3490 and 3491) (0.60 m in size) which reduced the width of the doorway

to 1.25 m. Changes were also made to the eastern door into Room 5 by the insertion of a low wall (3429) across the base of the door. Built over the threshold stone of the earlier doorway and partially over the mosaic floors of both rooms, this wall reduced the height of the doorway by 0.40 m.

At the same time as these alterations were being carried out, the walls of Room 3 were being repaired, as indicated by a series of roughly cut post-holes (3504, 3605, 3544, 3546, 3552 and 3554) located around the sides of the room (Fig. 6.58). Measuring on average 0.60×0.30 m in size and varying in depth between 0.10–0.30 m these cuts had all been dug through the mosaic pavement 3499. Positioned close to the walls of the room, they are thought to have held timber posts to support the walls during this work. Two further, larger cuts (3542 and 3511) located in the northwest and southeast corners of the room, again cutting the mosaic, may also be associated with this activity.³⁰

Following the removal of these props, the floor level

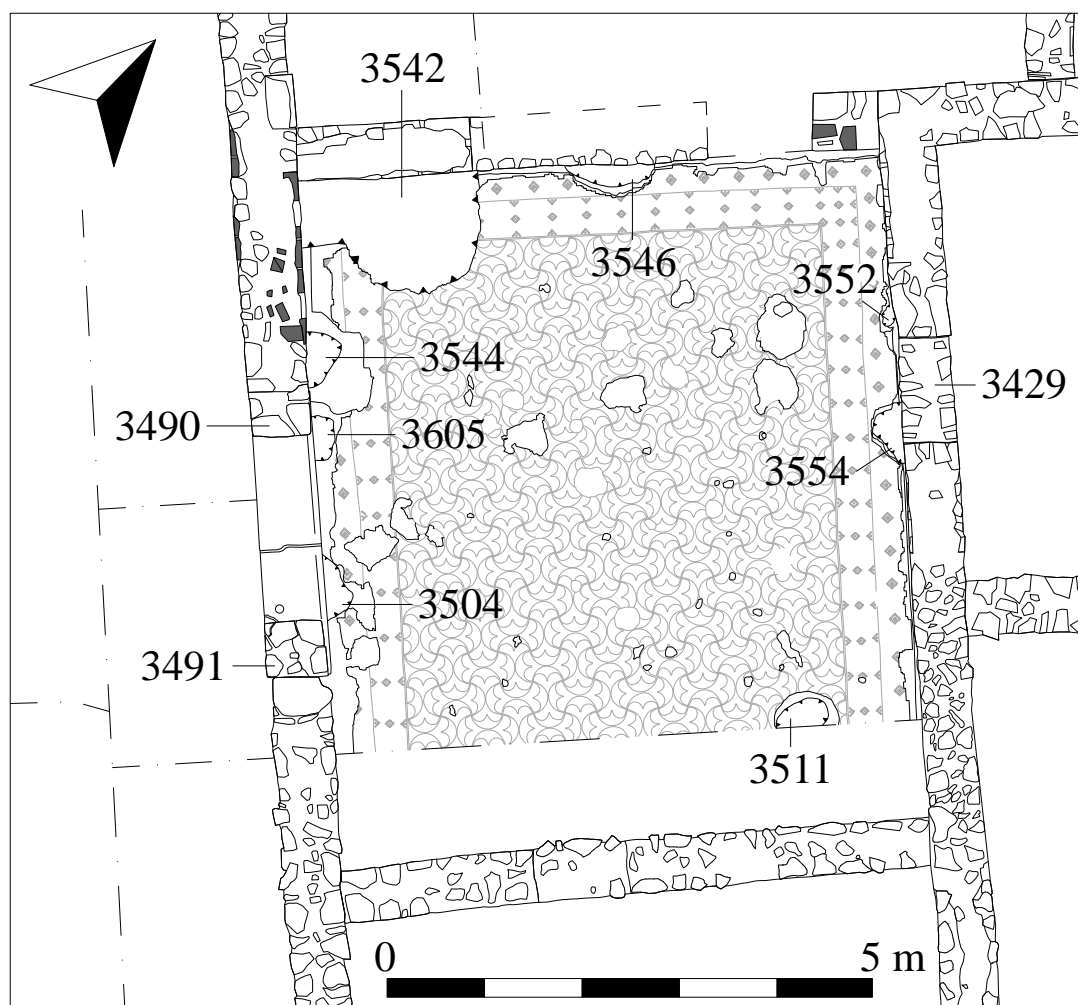


Figure 6.58. Room 3 of the east wing showing the Phase 7 post-holes cutting the earlier mosaic pavement 3499

of Room 3 was raised. Initially a yellowy-grey sandy silt (3494) containing fragments of mortar and plaster, fallen from the surrounding walls, was spread around the sides of the room (see Fig. 6.57b). A compact mid-grey silty clay (3496) (0.15 m thick) was then spread over 3494 to form the new surface of the room (Fig. 6.59; cf. Fig. 6.57c). Along the northern side of the room layer 3496 could be seen to extend through the door into Room 2. Although the eastern part of Room 2 was not excavated, a similar layer of dark silty clay (7116) (0.20 m thick) covering the floor of the earlier room was revealed in a sondage excavated along the western side of the room. The level of this deposit matched that of 3496 and seems to imply 7116 is a continuation of this surface. These layers contained a mix of ceramics covering the late 5th to mid-6th century.³¹

Room 5, the eastern of these three interconnected rooms, was also levelled over. Against the southern side of the room, directly overlying the mosaic 115/3426, was a yellowy-grey sandy silt (110/3423/3459). Banking-up against the inner face of wall 114 and spreading to the north, the composition and inclusions within the deposit appeared to match that of layer 3494 in Room 3, suggesting these may be the same deposit and were spread at the same

time. Over this was laid a compact greyish-brown silty clay (111/3406/3458) containing a mix of rubble, tile and mortar (Fig. 6.60). The level of this layer matched the top of blocking wall 3429 at the base of the doorway to Room 3, suggesting this formed the new surface of the room.

No evidence of any kind of paving was found over these clay layers, making it difficult to ascertain how these rooms functioned in this period but they may have had a domestic role. Across the centre of Room 3 a thin compact layer of silt (3492/3430), thought to be an occupation horizon, built up over 3496 (Fig. 6.61). Small fragments of animal bone, charcoal and burnt clay were recovered from this layer. Ceramic fragments were also present, including some worn pieces covering the late 5th to the first half of the 6th century, implying continued use of this room in subsequent phases.

Repairs and alterations were also carried out in both the northern and southern parts of Room 4 due to the partial collapse of the eastern wall. Initially the *praefurnium* was dismantled and a new wall (3464) was built within the gap, the lower part of which blocked-in the flue. Although now only partially surviving, wall 3464 had a distinct construction technique (Fig. 6.62). The lower part of the

wall over the flue was made up of two courses of tile. Above this was a course of angular limestone blocks, some of which had been placed on end to create an almost herring-bone style finish, with two further courses, one of tile and one of limestone, over this. A light-pinkish mortar was used to bond the stones and was spread liberally over both sides of the wall. While the mortar was still wet, various horizontal and vertical lines had been scored around the upper and lower two courses of the western face, while angular marks had been scored around the upright stones.

The hypocaust and raised floor of the southern part of Room 4 were removed and an olive-brown clay (3590) (0.30 m thick), partially formed from the bonding material

removed from the hypocaust *pilae*, was spread over the tile sub-floor 3597. Mixed in with the clay were a number of circular *pilae* from the demolished hypocaust stacks. Pottery covering the early to mid-5th century was recovered from this deposit, along with a very worn 5th-century coin (SF 6613/Cat. 311) possibly dating to between AD 445 and 498. A layer of tile and limestone rubble (3513) was then spread over 3590 to form a rough surface (Fig. 6.63). This new floor was almost 0.35 m below the level of the room's original floor and now matched the level of the



Figure 6.59. Room 3, looking north, showing Phase 7 layer 3496



Figure 6.60. Room 5 of the east wing showing the Phase 7 deposits infilling the room.

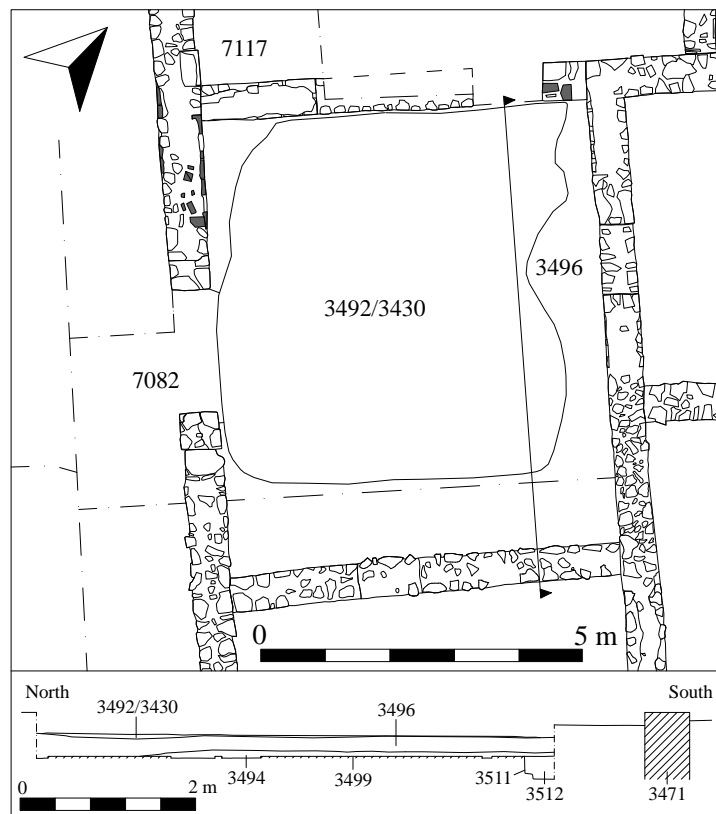


Figure 6.61. Plan and section of Room 3 showing occupation layer 3492/3430 overlying 3496

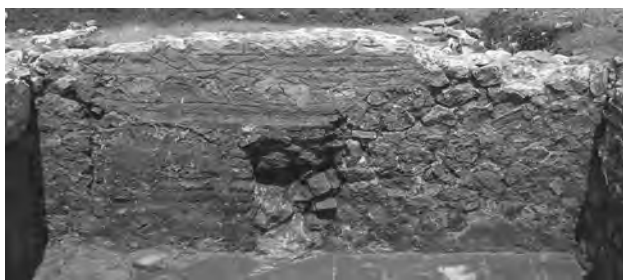


Figure 6.62. Detail of wall 3464 built over the praefurnium of the southern room of Room 4



Figure 6.63. View of the southern room of Room 4 showing the Phase 7 deposits infilling it following the removal of the hypocaust and raised floor



Figure 6.64. Detail of wall 3467 showing the lowered doorway (1 m scale)

floor in the northern part of Room 4. It also now matched the level of the new surface covering the former portico (3869/7084/3712/7082), this area remaining accessible via the western door of the room. Access to the as-yet unexcavated room south of Room 4 was also maintained via the southern door in wall 3467, although this door appears to have been slightly lowered to take account of the new floor level in Room 4 (Fig. 6.64). Pottery ranging

from the late 5th to mid-6th century in layer 3513 indicates the occupation of this room spanned a number of phases.

In the northern room of Room 4 mosaic 3481 was lifted as part of these alterations, although two patches were left along the southern and eastern sides of the room, along with some small fragments against the southern face of wall 3471. As with the mosaic pavements in the former portico, the *tesserae* were presumably reused to form the new mosaic pavement being created in the nave and sanctuary of the basilica. Following this, post-holes (3520, 3534, 3536, 3538 and 7401) were then cut through the underlying mortar 3483, with a further two (3577 and 3579) cut through the surviving fragments of the mosaic 3481. Extending to the south of 3520 was a linear cut c. 1.90 m in length (3560). Against the northern side of the room eight additional small stake-holes (3522, 3526, 3524, 3528, 3530, 3532, 3600 and 7402) were also located cut through 3483 (Fig. 6.65). No clear pattern could be discerned in the arrangement of these cuts and it may be that they were dug to hold temporary supports erected whilst the room was being repaired. Once these posts were removed, a dark-grey silt containing frequent tile fragments (3478) was spread across the room to form a new rough surface. Along with some 5th/6th-century ceramics, 24 coins from the 4th to 6th centuries were found within this layer.³² Two similarly datable coins (SF 6605/Cat. 234 and SF 6597/Cat. 317) were found within layer 3521, the backfill of cut 3520, sealed by 3478.

To the east of these rooms, the open area (Room 7) in which the *praefurnium* had been located was levelled over (Fig. 6.66). The door along the southern side of the area between walls 3598 and 3599 was blocked (7402) and a thick yellowy-brown silty clay (3540) was then spread across the area, sealing the tile base of the dismantled firing chamber and covering the lower course of wall 3464. The storerooms along the northern side of this area were also levelled over. Covering the floor of the western room was a dark orangey-brown clay silt (3468) that is thought to derive at least in part from the collapse of the building's *pisé* walls.³³ Evidence for this can be seen along the southern side of the room where some of the masonry mixed into 3468 could be seen tipping northward, having collapsed from wall 3461. Pottery from this layer dates to the 3rd century and, rather than dating the collapse, should be seen as dating the original construction of the walls, the pottery having been mixed into the clay at the time this building was built. Two coins from this layer (SF 6557/Cat. 491 and SF 6558/Cat. 374), dating from between the 4th and 6th centuries, would seem to confirm this. Within this layer was a large quantity of animal bone and a number of small finds, including a bone pin (SF 6553), fragments of a small iron ring (SF 6569) and a decorated circular copper mount (SF 6555), all suggestive of occupational waste.

Overlying deposits 3540 and 3468 was a further yellowy-brown clay silt (3457/3462). This deposit completely covered the storerooms and extended across the southern area, including the lower tile course of wall 3464. A pot

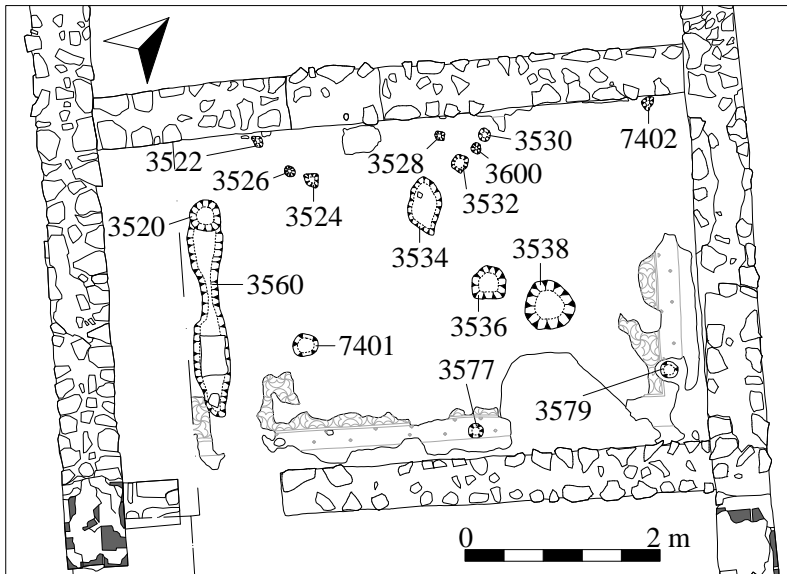


Figure 6.65. Plan of the northern room of Room 4 showing the Phase 7 post-holes cutting the earlier mosaic pavement 3481 and bedding mortar 3483

join between layer 3540 and 3462 suggests these layers were spread almost simultaneously.³⁴ These layers raised the level of this southern space by *c.* 0.50 m. No evidence of any kind of occupation was found over the surface, suggesting this area remained an open space. The blocking of the southern door implies this area was accessed from the eastern, as-yet unexcavated, side. It is possible that a door may have been cut through to link the space with any of the three surrounding rooms (Rooms 3, 4 or 5), but this must remain pure conjecture as there is no real evidence to confirm this from the level of the surviving walls.

The south portico

Although only a very small area of the south portico was excavated, a mid-brownish-green silty clay (7903), similar in composition to layer 3712 at the southern end of the east portico, was found spread across the surface (Fig. 6.67). Once again the mosaic had been lifted before layer 7903 had been laid. As well as covering the portico, 7903 was found to continue through the doorway in wall 7906 and extend across the partially exposed room to the south. In addition to ceramics from the 3rd, 4th and 5th centuries this layer also contained pieces dating to the first half of the 6th century, suggesting continued use of this room in subsequent phases.

Associated with this levelling episode was the construction of a new wall (7905). Located along the northern side of wall 7906, wall 7905 extended 0.62 m from the western edge of the trench and stopped in line with the west side of the doorway in wall 7906 (Fig. 6.68). It was built with limestone blocks, varying in size from between $0.57 \times 0.24 \times 0.15$ m to $0.35 \times 0.23 \times 0.12$ m, interspersed with tile and appeared to have been built in a construction cut dug through the mortar bedding layer 7904. Why this wall was built is unclear, especially as it is thought that wall 7906 remained standing. However, its location directly to the side of the doorway may suggest that rather than being a structural wall, 7905 may have formed the foundation for a bench.

The courtyard

As part of the wider alterations associated with the construction of the

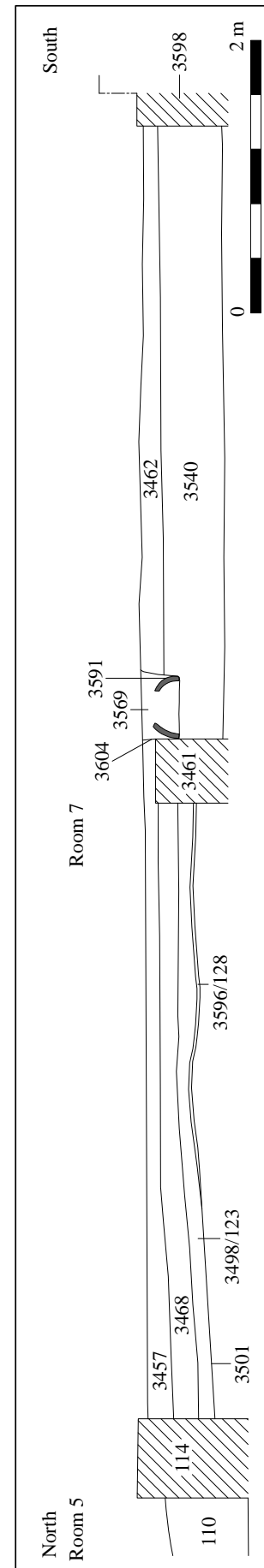


Figure 6.66. West-facing section showing the Phase 7 levelling deposits across Room 7 (and 5). The later Phase 8 burial 3604 is shown cutting these layers. See Fig. 6.57c for location

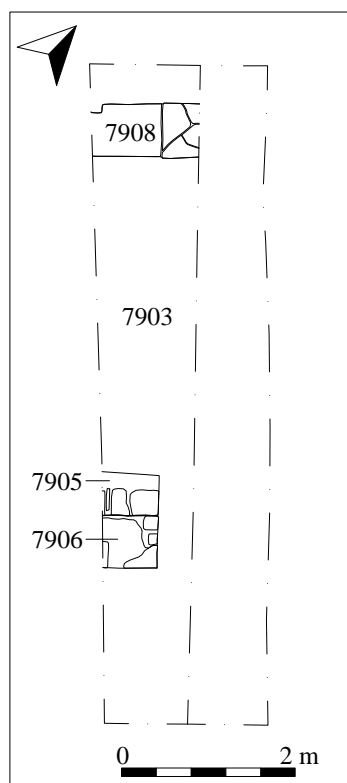


Figure 6.67. The former south portico in Phase 7



Figure 6.68. Detail of possible bench foundation 7905 built against northern face of wall 7906 (1 m scale)

basilica, the area of the courtyard was levelled over (Fig. 6.69). A mid-greenish-grey clay silt, up to 0.30 m thick and containing frequent small limestone fragments, tile and mortar flecks, was spread across the entire area following the construction of the basilica. Only the statue base 7022 and the wall of the inner pool (3719) were left visible. To the east of the basilica's apse this deposit was excavated as layer 3330. This layer sealed the eastern stylobate foundation wall 3850, the overlying limestone slabs having

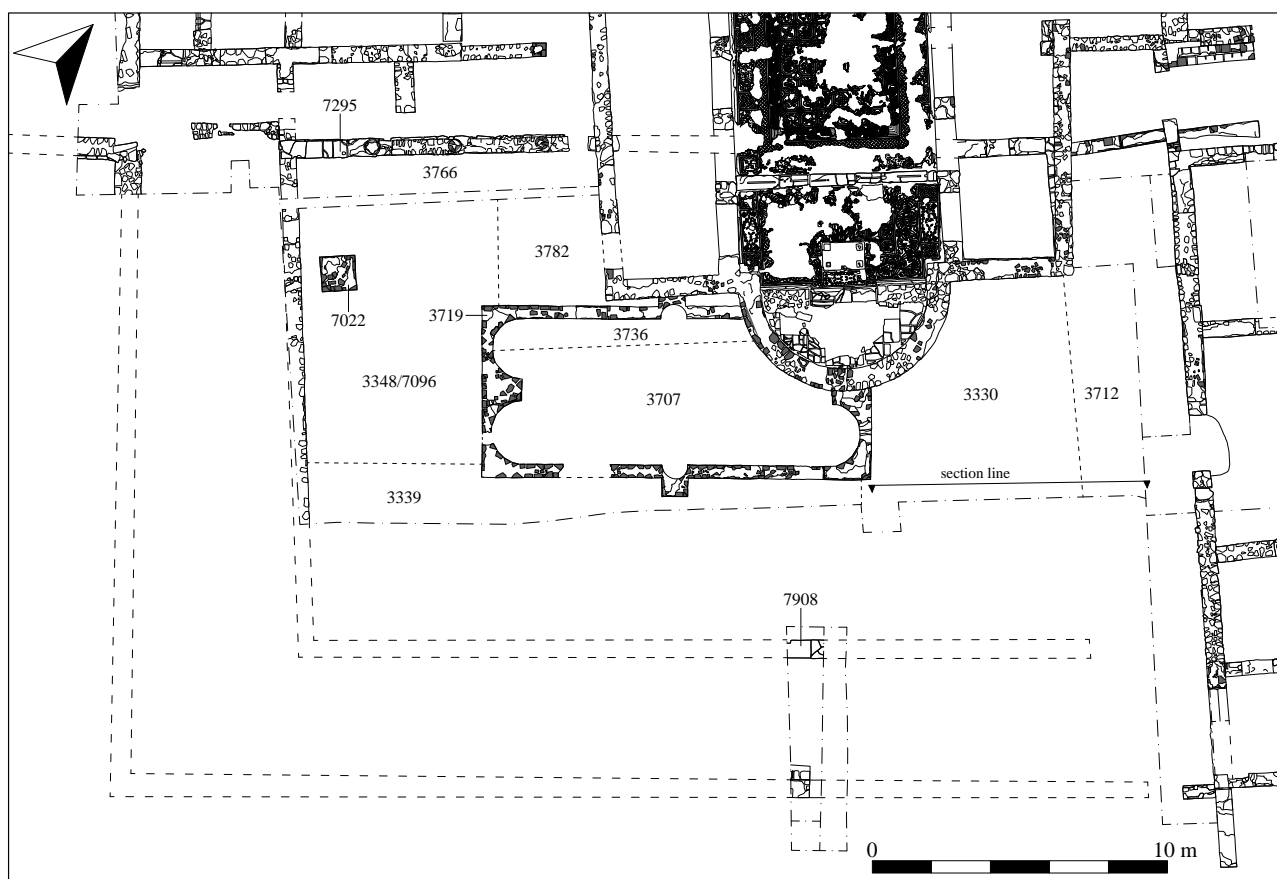


Figure 6.69. The courtyard in Phase 7

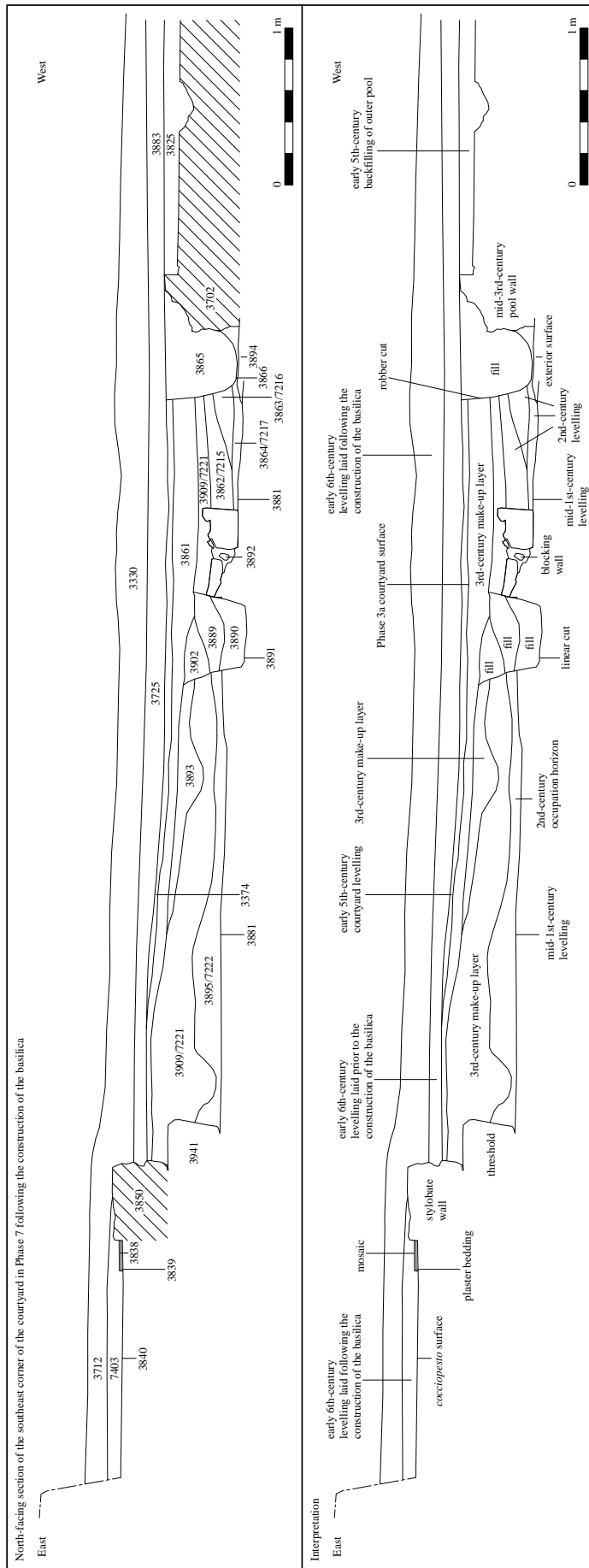


Figure 6.70. North-facing section across the southeast corner of the courtyard showing the Phase 7 alterations made following the construction of the basilica. See Fig. 6.69 for location

been removed prior to this, and extended into the east portico where it was found to be a continuation of layer 3712, implying the courtyard and portico were levelled over at the same time (Fig. 6.70). Amongst the ceramics recovered from layer 3330 was the hooked rim of a late 5th-century LRC 3E.³⁵ To the west the deposit was excavated as layer 3348/3782/7096/3339/3766. These layers, which were banked-up against the inner faces of the surrounding stylobate, contained a mixture of ceramics dating to the 1st, 3rd, 4th and 5th centuries, with the latest dating to the late 5th/early 6th century. Animal bone, vessel glass, marble fragments including a piece of a carved window or door frame (SF 6260), a clay loom weight (SF 6130), and a fragment of a green glass cake (SF 6031) were also retrieved. The coins cover the period AD 348–402, including one from the mint at Cyzicus (SF 6065/Cat. 192) and one from Siscia (SF 6133/Cat. 158), and seem to confirm the suggestion made by Sam Moorhead that 4th-century coins continued to circulate during the 5th and 6th centuries (see Volume 6.2, Chapter 2). Unlike the eastern stylobate, the limestone cover slabs 7295 and 7908 on the southern and northern stylobate remained *in situ*, the level of the surface matching the base of these slabs.

After the use of the inner pool as a mortar-mixing area during the construction of the basilica, a light yellowy-brown clay silt (3882) built up across the eastern half of the space, partially banking-up against the western side of the apse (Fig. 6.71). Abundant fragments of mortar and limestone blocks within the deposit, along with tile and plaster pieces, suggest this may have been a dump of building waste from the construction of the basilica. The pottery within 3882 dated to the 6th century. The deposit also contained some residual 5th-century finds including a fragment of a rim from a late 4th- to early 5th-century ARS Hayes 67 vessel that may join with a fragment of a similar vessel found in layer 3330. Two early 5th-century Keay 25/26 amphora spikes were also retrieved from 3882, with similar pieces again found in layer 3330. Seven coins, three dating from the mid- to late 4th century (SFs 6220/Cat. 164, 6216/Cat. 175, 6233/Cat. 220) and four to the early 5th century (SFs 6190/Cat. 246, 6191/Cat. 249, 6192/Cat. 256, 6195/Cat. 270) from layer 3882 again suggest

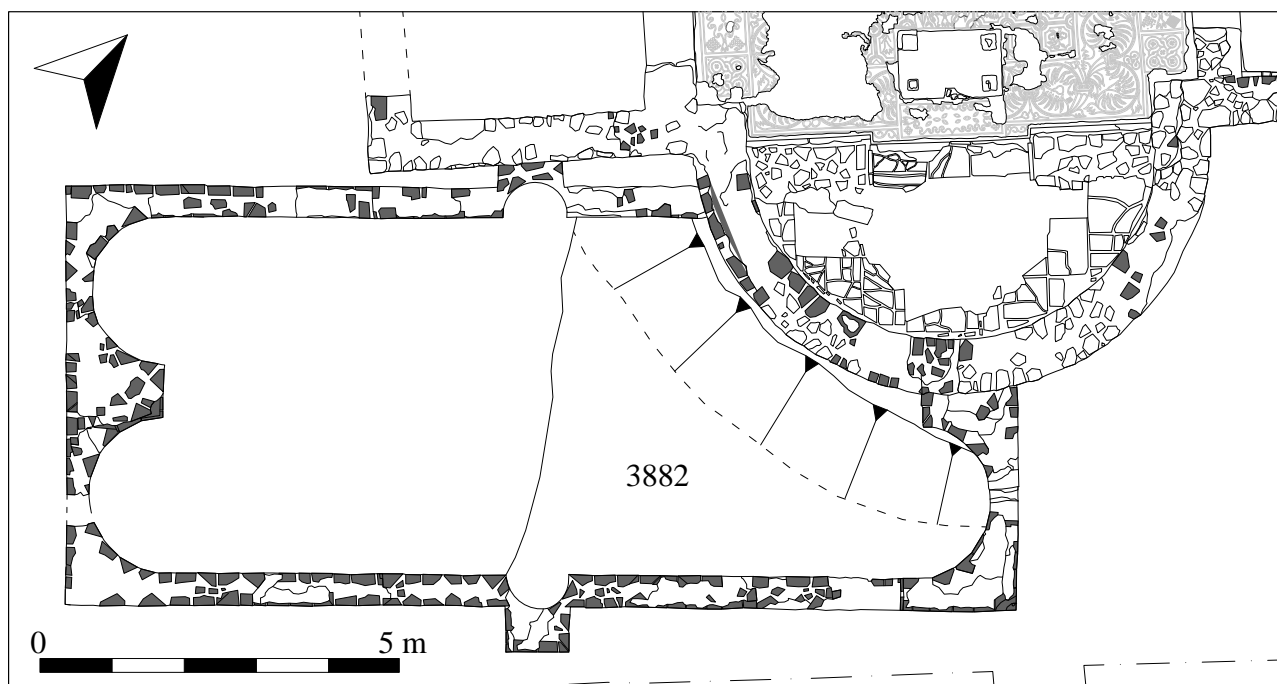


Figure 6.71. Deposit 3882 within the inner pool

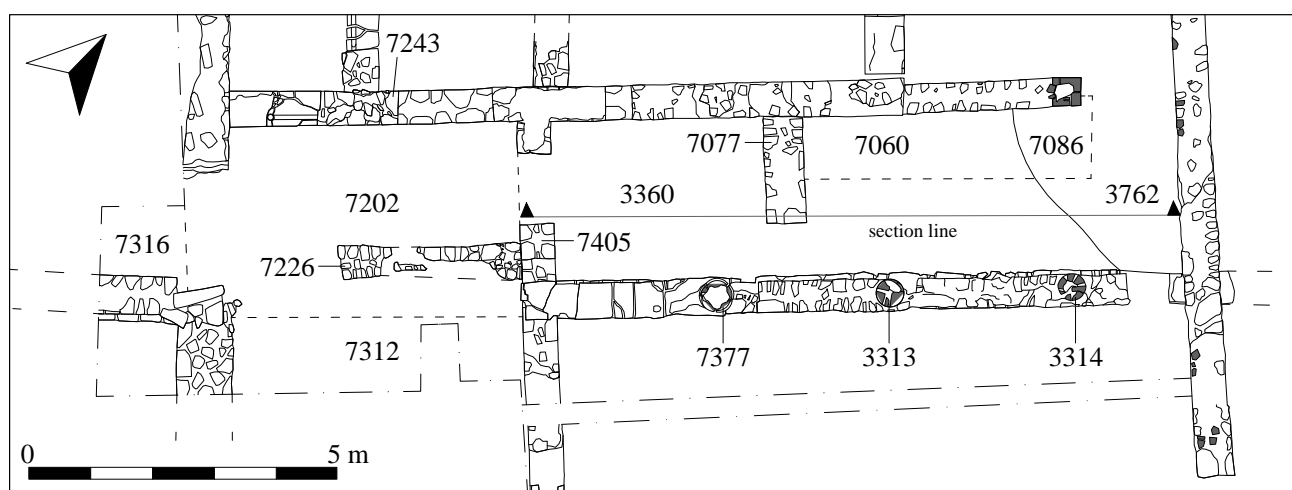


Figure 6.72. The north portico in Phase 7

these early coins remained in circulation during the 6th century. Soon after 3882 was deposited, a mid-greenish-grey silty clay (3707/3736) was spread across the entire area of the pool (see Fig. 6.69). This layer appears to have been part of the general levelling episode taking place within the courtyard as it was found to extend through a gap that had been cut in the southern wall of the pool just to the west of the niche, and continued as layer 3348/3330 beyond. Pottery dating to the 5th and 6th centuries was recovered from layer 3707.³⁶ Layer 3707 also contained two very corroded coins (SFs 6076/Cat. 498 and 6077/Cat. 499) thought to date to between the 4th and 6th century as well as a triangular-shaped copper-alloy object (SF 6210) that may be part of a stylus.

The north portico

The new basilica was constructed over the eastern end of the north portico, leaving c. 10 m of the portico remaining to the west beyond the new building. Despite this, it appears the western end was not demolished but continued to be used during this period since the survival of three bases of the northern colonnade (3313, 3314 and 7377) suggests these columns remained standing to support the roof (Fig. 6.72). Internally, however, the space was altered, the floor and underlying mortar bedding layer being removed and a new wall (7077) (1.70 × 0.64 m) incorporating a doorway (0.85 m wide) being constructed towards the western end of the portico, dividing the space into two rooms. A thick, dark greyish-brown silty clay (3360/7060) (up to 0.20 m

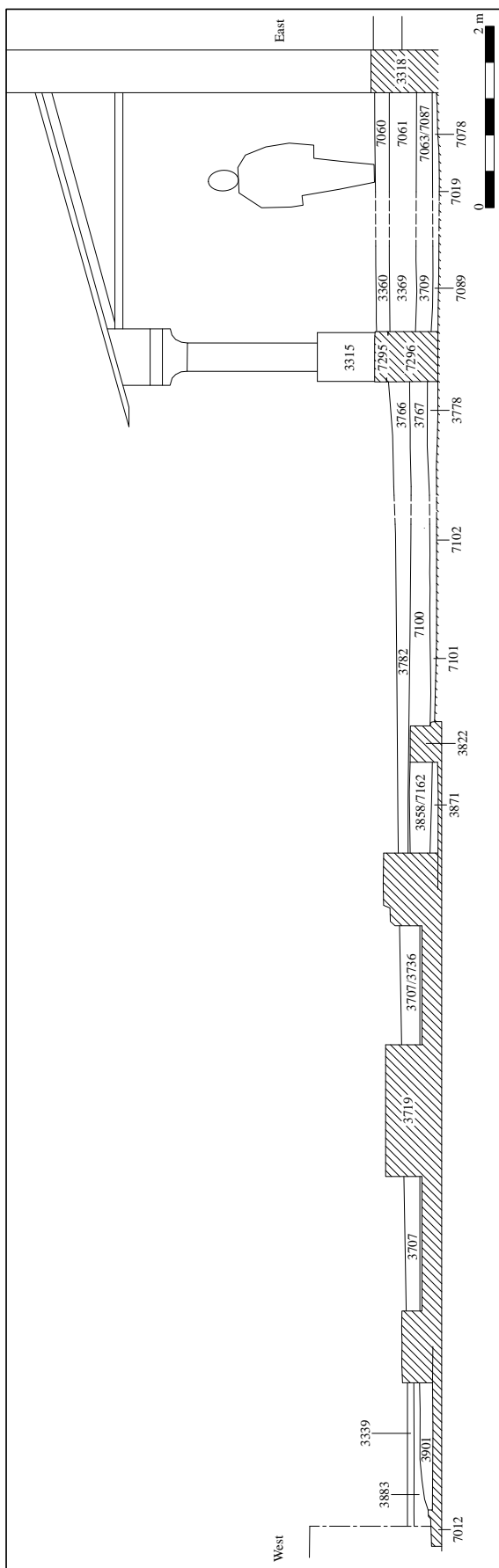


Figure 6.73. Cross-section of the courtyard and north portico in Phase 7

thick) was then spread between the rooms to form a new surface (Fig. 6.73). Dating to the late 5th/early 6th century, this layer contained a noticeable amount of demolition rubble and mortar mixed within it. Some fragments of the bedding mortar for the original floor of the portico were also recovered from the layer. In the eastern room, due to the slumping of the underlying deposits, a further dark-brown silty clay (3762/7086), which extended 1.40 m from the western wall of the basilica, was spread over 3360/7060 (Fig. 6.74). Access to these rooms could be gained either via the original western doorway of the portico or by a new door (0.70 m wide) cut through the stylobate along the southern side of the eastern room, which allowed access to the levelled-over courtyard beyond.

To the west, layer 3360/7060 extended through the western doorway and, as layer 7202, covered the small vestibule fronting the marine entrance. Once more the original floor of this room had been removed prior to this levelling episode since layer 7202, which contained pottery dating to the late 5th/early 6th century, was found to seal the outlet drain of the now disused central fountain. The southern wall of this room (7242) also seems to have been removed before the room was levelled over, as layer 7202 was found to cover the wall's demolished remains and (as layer 7312) extend across the northern end of the west portico. Layer 7202 (as layer 7316) also extended through the door into the eastern room of the western marine entrance (see below).

Once the area had been levelled over a new east–west-aligned wall (7226) (measuring 2.70 m in length by 0.41 m wide) was built extending from the western face of wall 7405 (see Fig. 6.72). Situated just to the south of the door connecting the vestibule to the north portico, this wall is thought to have formed the foundation for a possible porch, the other side of which was formed by wall 7243. The two doorways through wall 7243, the eastern of which would have been accessed from the new porch, remained open.

The western marine entrance

Indications are that this building continued to be used as an entrance during this period. However, with the principal entrance of the basilica now being from the north, it seems likely this access was used only intermittently. Environmental conditions may also have played a part as it seems the inlet channel surrounding the building was beginning to silt-up, making access to it difficult and possibly limited to only certain times of the year.

Internally, due to later truncation associated with the 1960s land reclamation, very little surviving stratigraphy relating to this phase or indeed any later phases of the building's use survived (Fig. 6.75). In the western room, a dark greyish-black silty clay (7303) was located against the western face of wall 7302, extending c. 0.80 m over the *cocciopesto* floor surface 7304; it contained no dating evidence. By contrast, in the eastern room a mid-grey silty clay (7305), located in a slot dug in the northwest corner of the room, contained a large quantity of tile as well as pottery

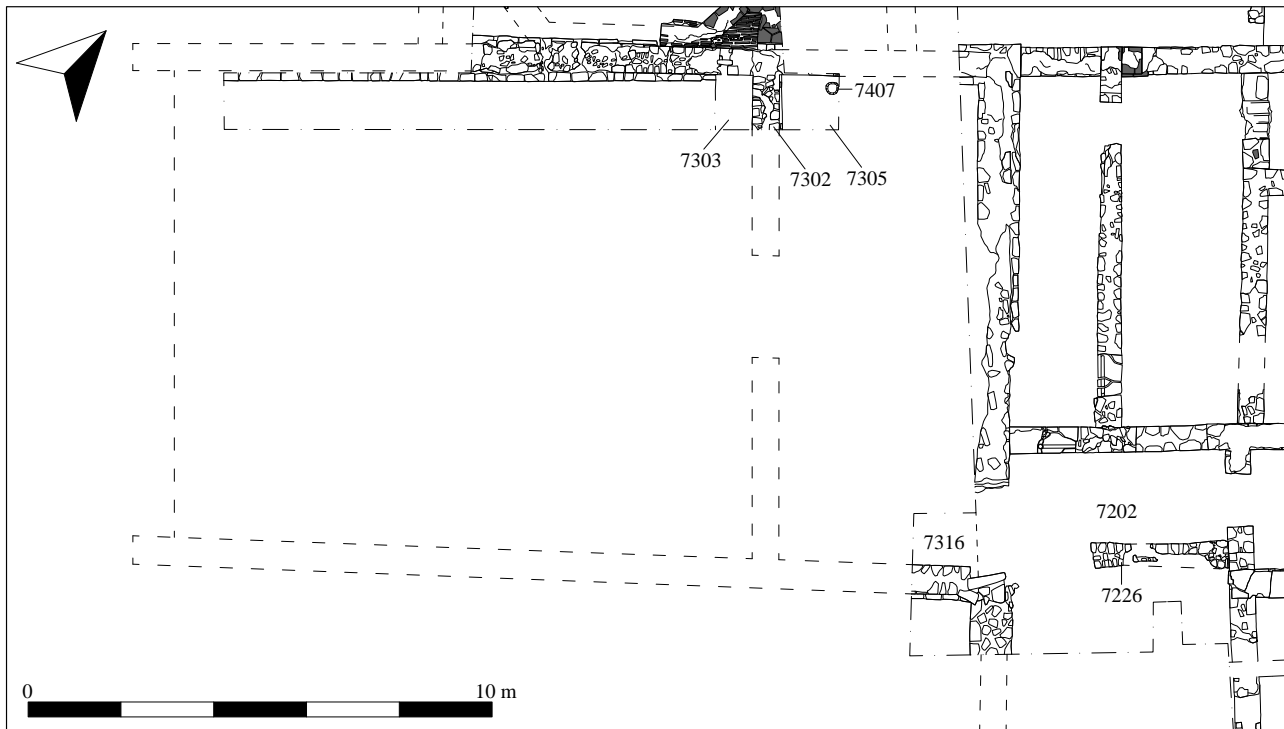


Figure 6.75. The western marine entrance in Phase 7

north–south-aligned wall (3987) which was built between wall 7290 and the northern wall of the marine entrance following the demolition of the western end of wall 7247/7386. Constructed over the mosaic pavement 3986, the western side of the wall was aligned with the eastern edge of the door in wall 7290, which remained open. Two large post-holes (7408 and 7409) seen cutting 3986, along the western side of the wall, may indicate the position of scaffolding poles used in the construction of the wall (Figs 6.79 and 6.80; cf. Fig. 4.107).³⁷

Internally the building was divided into three rooms (Fig. 6.81). The two eastern rooms were separated by a north–south-aligned wall (2113/2114), the southern end of which was keyed into wall 2112 (Fig. 6.82).³⁸ Measuring 6.70 m in length by 0.60 m wide, the wall had a deep foundation (c. 0.50 m high) over which two courses of roughly squared limestone blocks of varying sizes, bonded with a compact white mortar, survived. Although the extent of the robbing of wall 2113/2114 made it difficult to identify the position of a doorway, it must be assumed the rooms were interconnected. The western edge of wall 2113/2114 abutted the eastern edge of the door in wall 2111/1109. This doorway was altered at this time as a new wall (7416), bonded with a similar mortar to wall 2113/2114, was built across it (Fig. 6.83). Due to later robbing it is unclear whether this wall fully blocked the door or was just a low foundation used to raise the door's threshold. Incorporated into the base of the wall was a drain which would have allowed any rising ground water a means of being channelled out of the interior of the building.



Figure 6.76. View looking north of the eastern wall of the marine entrance. The varying height of the surrounding cocciopesto floor 7248/7056 suggests the building subsided, possibly due to the liquefaction of the soft underlying deposits (2 m scale)

The central and western rooms were divided by the earlier Phase 3a wall 7288. Again it is difficult to understand how these two rooms were connected due to the later robbing of this wall, but it seems likely a door would have

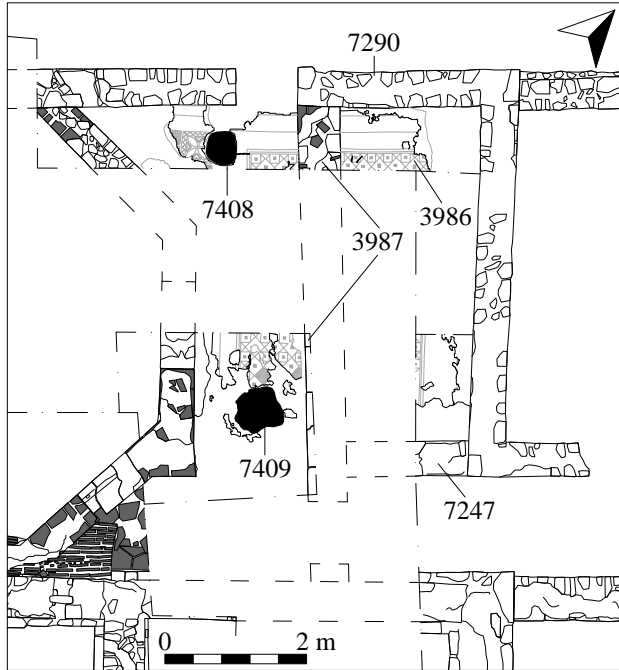


Figure 6.79. Plan of the western end of the northwest corner house showing the position of post-holes 7408 and 7409

been cut through the wall to allow access between them. The contemporary right-angled wall 7291, keyed into the southern end of wall 7288, was also incorporated into the new building, although the eastern end of this wall, along with its southern return (wall 7292), were removed. Wall 7247, which abutted the junction of wall 7288 and 7291, was also retained. As well as forming the southern end of the western room, wall 7247, together with wall 7291,



Figure 6.80. Detail of post-hole 7409 cut through the earlier mosaic pavement 3986



Figure 6.81. View of the northwest corner house, looking south. The stair block foundation 2115 can be seen in the centre of the photograph



Figure 6.82. The two eastern rooms of the Phase 7 northwest corner house divided by wall 2113/2114 (1 m scale)



Figure 6.83. Detail of wall 7416



Figure 6.85. View of the stair block 2115 and walling 2116 against the western face of wall 2113/2114 (2 m scale)



Figure 6.86. The southern room of the northwest corner house containing the stair block foundation 7045 (1 m scale)

wall 2112 and the northwest corner of the earlier room defined by walls 3978 and 3979 (Fig. 6.86). Incorporated into wall 2117 was a central doorway (0.83 m wide). Internally the room measured 4.70×2.20 m. The walls of the room were covered with plaster, fragments of which were found still attached to the southern face of wall 2112. At the eastern end of the room was a stone-built structure (7045) (2.10×0.90 m wide) constructed with roughly shaped limestone fragments bonded with a pinkish-orange mortar. Cut through layer 3910, this formed the foundation of the staircase, the width of it matching the foundation of the stair block 3081 located at the southern end of the western chamber.⁴¹ After the construction of the staircase a mid-brown silty clay (3908) (0.30 m thick) was spread across the room to form a new floor level. Although no pottery was recovered from this layer a very worn coin (SF 6204/Cat. 381) dated AD 379–435 was found, along with a large elaborately perforated and decorated rectangular copper alloy mount (SF 6229) dating from the late 4th/early 5th century (see Volume 6.2, Fig. 6.17.28 and Plate 6.4). Beyond the western door of this entrance building the earlier corridor, which had led into the former courtyard, was maintained, as was the door from the vestibule fronting the marine entrance, these two now forming the principal access routes to this two-storey building.

Connected with these changes, the internal arrangement of the small room defined by walls 3978 and 3979 was also altered (Fig. 6.87). Initially the door in the room's northern wall 3978 was blocked (7454) and a new door cut through the western wall 3979. A mid-greenish-brown clay silt (3998/3999) (0.18–0.28 m thick) was then spread across the room, sealing the remains of the floor surface 7021 and the bench 7023, the upper part of which had been demolished prior to this levelling episode. Pottery dating to the late 5th to 6th century was recovered from these layers, along with animal bones, glass, a possible iron knife blade (SF 6285) and a coin of the house of Theodosius c. AD 410–35 (SF 6283/Cat. 261). Cut into this levelling layer was a shallow oval pit (3996) (0.16 m deep), the base of which had been lined – as indicated by fragments of a light brownish-grey clay (7026) situated along the

northern edge of the cut (Figs 6.88 and 6.89). Overlying 7026 was a second clay lining (3995) which appeared to have been burnt as it was orangey-red in colour. As this burning appears to have occurred *in situ* it would seem to suggest that this feature was a small domestic oven/hearth.⁴² A patch of white mortar (3994) found overlying 3995 may have formed the foundation of a superstructure covering the oven.⁴³ Although the structure had been dismantled after use, the truncated neck of a 6th-century Phocian amphora was revealed along the southern side of the pit, set vertically upright with a tile placed under it as a support.⁴⁴ Assuming there had been a second, similar truncated amphora neck to the north it is possible these were used to support the floor of the oven/hearth over the fire/embers within the pit. Other examples of the use of truncated amphora necks within ovens/hearths/kilns dating to a similar period have been located within the Triconch excavations.⁴⁵

The octagonal room

The octagonal room appears to have continued in use during this period, but as its western end had slumped into the underlying softer deposits fronting the inlet channel edge, a number of alterations were necessary (see Fig. 6.77).⁴⁶ The central pool or fountain (7410) was removed and the cut backfilled (7411), while the mosaic 7152 was partially lifted. Across the western side of the room the mortar bedding for the mosaic was also lifted, presumably because it too had been damaged following the slumping of the building. In its place a compacted stone surface (7146) comprising a mix of small sub-angular and rounded limestone and tile fragments was spread across the area, the eastern edge of which partially sealed the robber cut and backfill of the central feature (Fig. 6.90). As part of these alterations the door in the eastern side of the building was blocked by wall 7412, the construction and mortar of which appears to match that of the contemporary wall 3987 to the east.

Due to the 1960s reclamation works, interpreting the function of this building in this period is difficult. Octagonal rooms associated with basilicas have often been interpreted as baptisteries due to the symbolism of

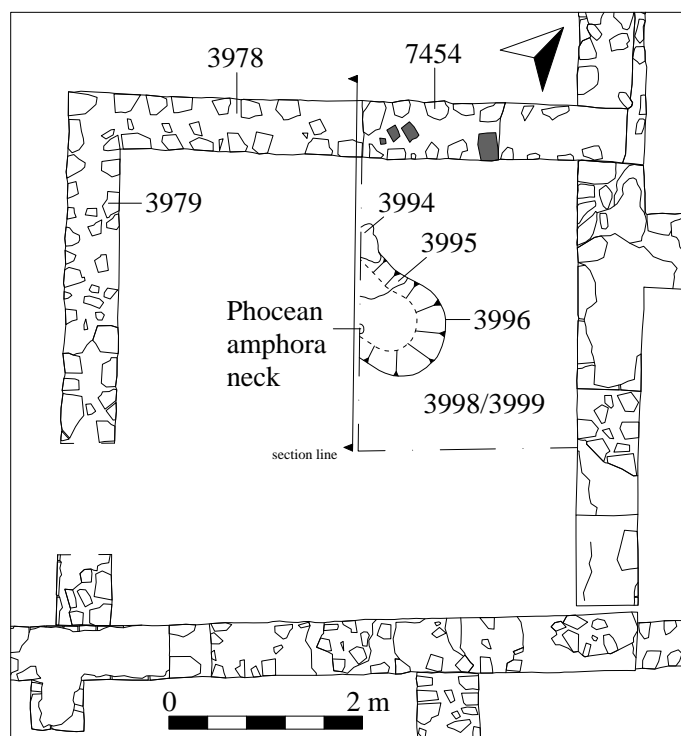


Figure 6.87. Plan of the small domestic oven/hearth 3996 within the room defined by walls 3978 and 3979

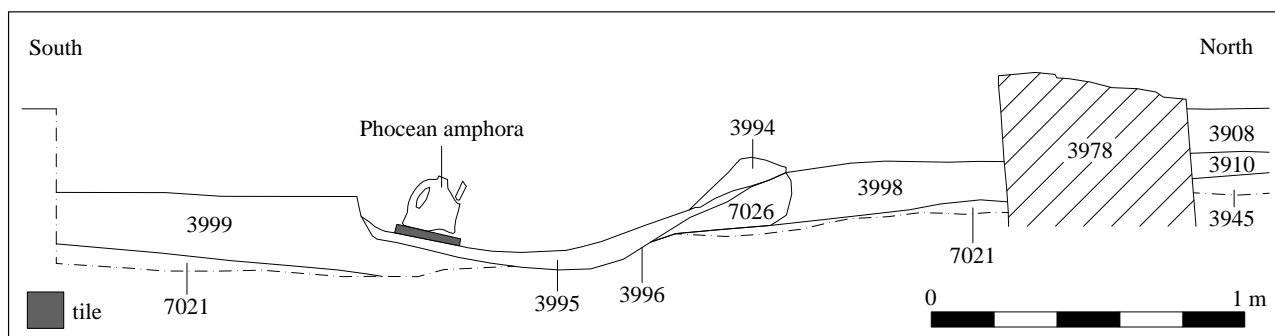


Figure 6.88. East-facing section across oven/hearth 3996. See Fig. 6.87 for location

the number eight representing eternity and rebirth. Often a room of a bath-house was adapted into a baptistery or sections of a former bath-house were built over, the new baptistery then utilising the old building's water supply and heating system. However, without further excavation such an interpretation for the Vrına Plain structure must remain conjecture and the possibility that the building was used as a workroom or storeroom cannot be ignored, especially as the central pool, ideal as the baptismal font, had been removed prior to the reuse of the room.

The western bath-house

As part of the changes associated with the foundation of the basilica, the western bath-house was demolished to the level of its sub-floor. The demolition appears to have been deliberate as no rubble was found overlying the ruins, suggesting the building was carefully dismantled;

the building material retrieved was presumably reused in the construction of the basilica and associated buildings. In order to do this it seems the floors of the various rooms were removed first before scaffolding was set up to form platforms from which the upper parts of the walls could carefully be dismantled. The upright supports for the scaffolding were cut through the building's sub-floor. Six of these substantial post-holes (2192, 2203, 2222, 7413, 7414 and 7415) were found within the central heated room, with a further three (2197, 2199 and 2201) in the western room (Fig. 6.91a; cf. Fig. 4.36).

Once the walls were removed and the scaffolding taken down, the sub-floor (2169) of the building remained exposed for a short time. During this period when the floor was open to the elements a series of thin layers of silt built up over the surface of the rooms (2159, 2158, 2160 and 2136) (Fig. 6.91b). This interlude presumably covered

the period in which the basilica was being constructed. Following the completion of the basilica the accumulated silts, along with the visible remains of the bath-house, were then covered by a thick mid-greyish-brown silty clay (2098) (Fig. 6.92). This layer (2098), dating to the early 6th century, also sealed the *prae-furnium* and extended (as layer 1186) to the east as far as wall 1165 and to the south (as layer 1182) as far as walls 1109/2111 and 7290, forming a new ground surface across the northwestern corner of the site.⁴⁷ The surface also extended (as layer 3815) to the north of the demolished line of wall 3816, where it dipped down to the edge of the shore line c. 2.85 m away. The western extent of layer 3815 sealed the northern room of the bath-house, while to the east it extended as far as a north-south-aligned wall (3813). This new wall had been built over layer 3812 and seems to have formed a barrier between the Vivari Channel to the northwest and the area fronting the northern entrance of the basilica complex to the east. Although the southern end of wall 3813 had been

destroyed by the 1960s drainage ditch, it was noticeable that the wall's construction technique matched that of wall 1180 and it seems likely these two walls were keyed into each other (Fig. 6.93). The area defined by these two walls was infilled by a dark greyish-black silty clay levelling

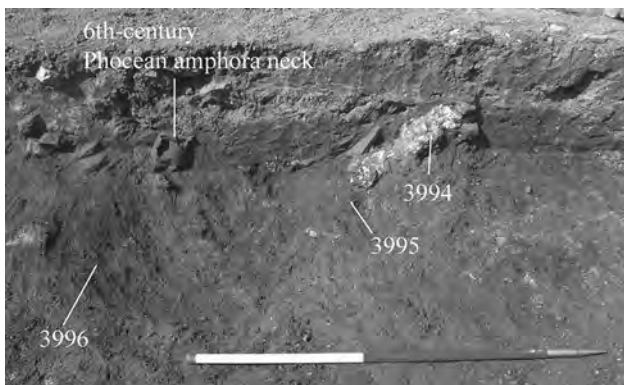


Figure 6.89. Oven/hearth 3996 (1 m scale)



Figure 6.90. The octagonal room in Phase 7 showing surface 7146 (2 m scale)



Figure 6.91. (a) Plan of the post-holes associated with the dismantling of the western bath-house; (b) the initial build-up of silts across the demolished building

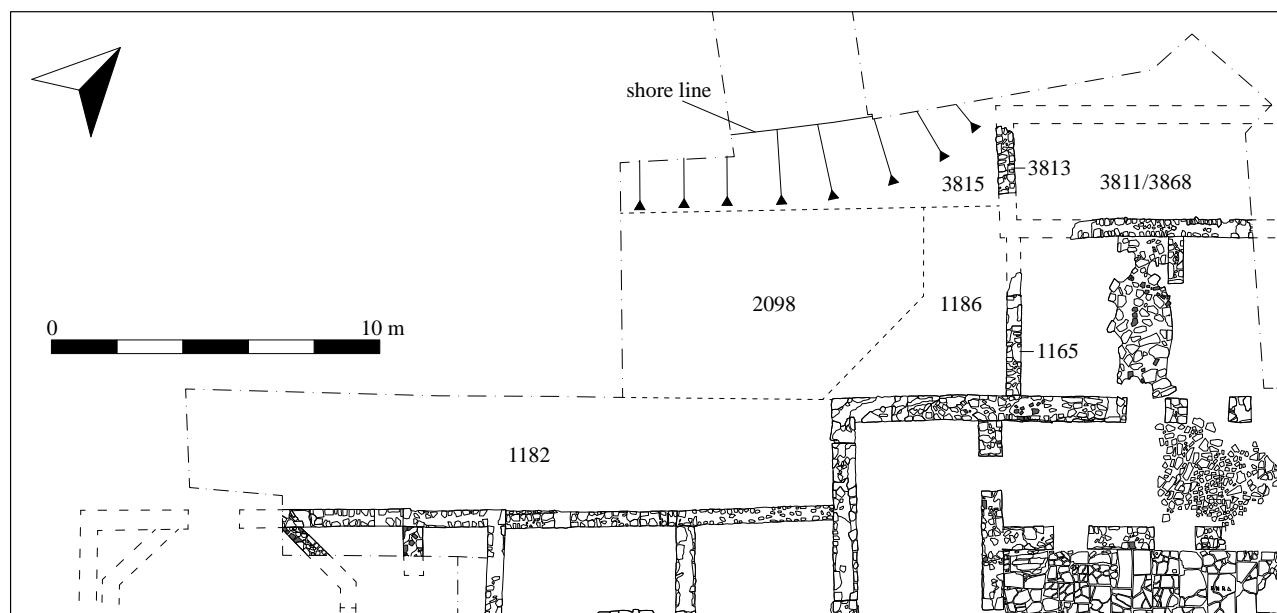


Figure 6.92. Plan of the levelling deposits spread across the northwest corner of the settlement following the demolition of the western bath-house



Figure 6.93. View of walls 1180 and 3813, looking west (2 m scale)

layer (1070/3811/3868) (0.20 m thick) that seems to have formed the new ground surface of this eastern area, the level of which roughly matched that of the surface in the exonarthex to the south of it. Mixed in with layer 3868 was a large amount of pottery (some of which was worn) including a range of locally produced cooking pots dating from the 4th to (early?) 5th century, a large part of the lower section of a Gazan amphora roughly dated to the late 4th/5th century, and several large imported and local amphora fragments. The latest material recovered dated to the late 5th century.⁴⁸ Layer 1070 also contained a mixed

ceramic assemblage including a complete 2nd-century Cretan amphora (1060).

The Southern Buildings

Although the investigation of the southern area of the *domus* was restricted, the information from the two trenches excavated would seem to indicate that the establishment of the basilica also had a major effect on the role and use of this area of the former house.

Evidence from the courtyard seems to suggest this area was now given over to agricultural production as five deep linear gullies (7813, 7815, 7817, 7819 and 7821/7833) orientated north–south were located cutting the surface of the courtyard (7806) (Fig. 6.94; cf. Figs 3.30 and 3.31).⁴⁹ Four of the gullies ran across the full width of the trench, while the eastern gully (7815) terminated when it reached the southern face of the Phase 1 wall 7834, a wall associated with the pre-villa building (Building 6) sealed by the Phase 3 courtyard. The gullies were between 0.87 m and 0.98 m wide apart from 7821, which was only 0.45 m wide, and were c. 0.40 m deep. They all had the same profile (steep sloping sides and rounded bases) and all had been cut into the layers below the external mosaic floor (7828) of the Phase 1 Building 6 (Fig. 6.95). The northern end of both 7813 and 7819 truncated walls 7834 and 7829, while cut 7833 partially truncated wall 7825/7830 and the pier base 7827 and associated pier 7826, all of which would have been visible along the sides and bases of the various cuts. Infilling all five gullies was a similar dark-grey gritty clay (7814, 7816, 7818, 7820 and 7822/7809), which presumably represents the material dug out from the gullies and subsequently backfilled. Pottery dating from the 4th to 5th century along with late 5th/6th-century material was recovered from the fills. Two coins from 7814 (SFs 6308/



Figure 6.94. Plan of the Phase 7 cultivation trenches cutting the surface of the Phase 3 southern courtyard 7806/7807

Cat. 395 and 6310/Cat. 355) have a similar date range, as well as a further coin (SF 6311/Cat. 321) thought to date between AD 450–75. These gullies are assumed either to have been a result of seasonal ploughing over a period of time or were dug deliberately for agricultural production which, from the shape and proximity of them, may have been vines. While environmental samples from the gullies unfortunately did not identify any grape pips within the fills, samples from the contemporary levelling layer 7116 in Room 2 of the former east wing and from layer 7903 in the southern portico did produce grape pips.⁵⁰

To the west (c. 27 m away), six similar linear gullies were found running across the site of the former building located to the southwest of the courtyard (Fig. 6.96). This building appears to have been demolished as part of the reorganisation of the area, some of the stone possibly having been reused in the construction of the basilica complex. A greenish-grey gritty clay silt (7702) (0.20–0.25 m thick) containing 5th-century pottery was spread across the remains of the three rooms of the building exposed. To the west, layer 7702 continued over the remains of wall 7713 and as layer 7704 extended as far as the edge of the channel. To consolidate the inlet channel edge a series of demolition layers (7737 and 7705) were banked-up at the western limit of the area.

Cut into the new ground surface (7702) were six shallow

linear cuts (7728, 7729, 7730, 7731, 7733 and 7738) orientated north–south (Fig. 6.97). The three eastern cuts (7738, 7730 and 7729) terminated at their northwestern end while the other three cuts all ran across the width of the trench and carried on beyond the trench edge. The two outer cuts (7738 and 7733) both measured 0.65 m in width, while the internal features were all roughly 0.95 m wide. They all had the same profile (steep sloping sides and rounded bases) and all had been cut through the underlying Phase 5 *cocciopesto* surface (7720/7721/7722) to a depth of between 0.11 m and 0.32 m (see Fig. 6.96). Infilling the gullies was a greenish-brown clay silt (7724, 7725, 7726, 7732, 7734 and 7711). Mixed throughout these fills was a large amount of limestone rubble; this derived partly from layer 7702 but would also have come from the demolished walls underlying 7702, the gullies all having been cut across the top of wall 7717. The eastern edge of 7738 had been cut along the western face of wall 7723. When the gullies were cut some attempt appears to have been made to remove the rubble on the ground surface, as indicated by a rock pile (7703) located to the west of gully 7733. Although now partially covering the fill of gully 7733, it did appear that an attempt had been made to place the rubble in a vague line, suggesting 7703 may have been deliberately piled up to form a rough wall demarcating the western limit of the agricultural activity in this area.

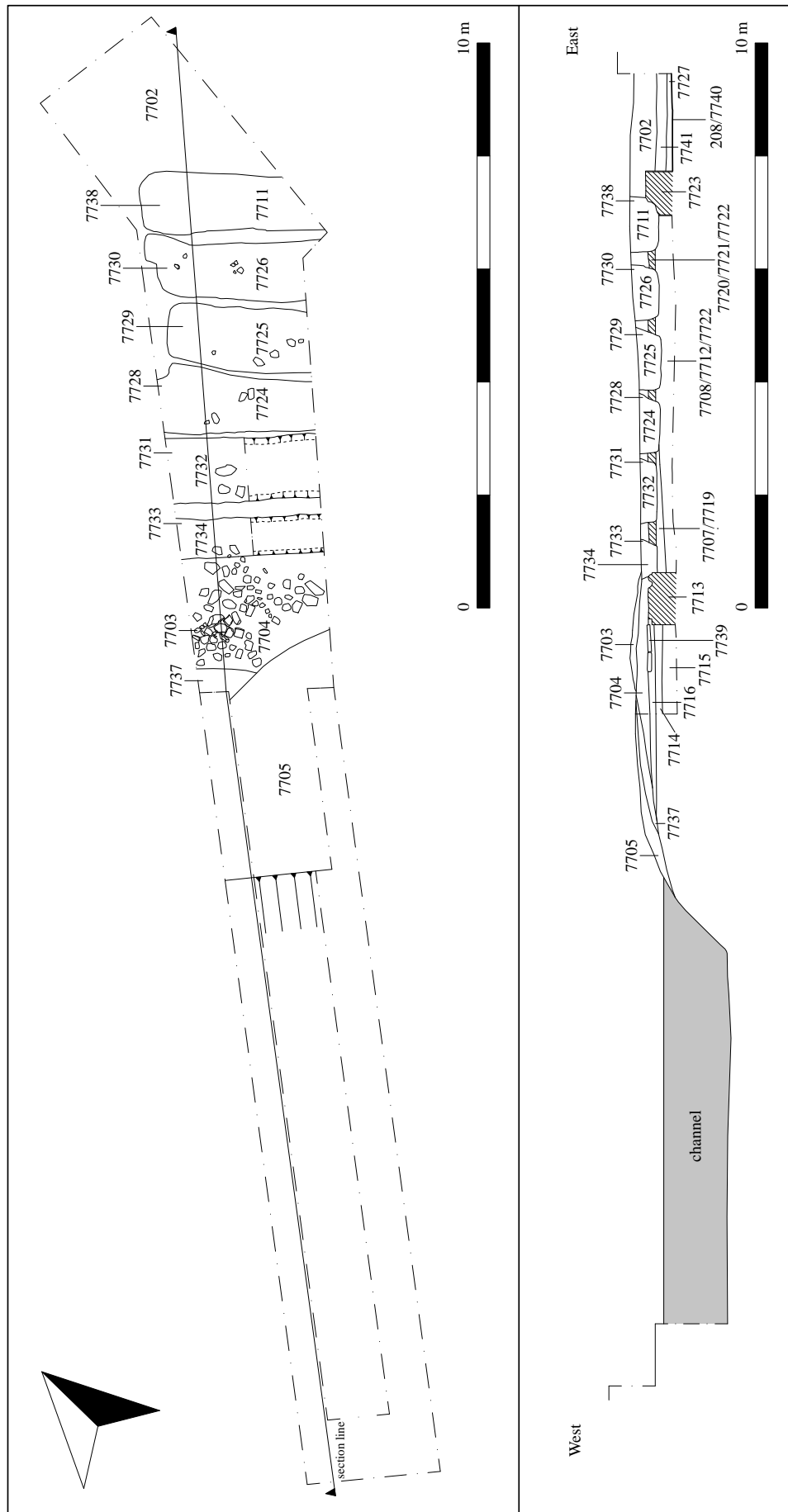


Figure 6.96. Plan and section of the building west of the southern courtyard in Phase 7



Figure 6.97. The Phase 7 cultivation trenches seen cutting the earlier Phase 5 cocciopesto surface 7720/7721/7722 (1 m scale)

Once more the precise nature of the agricultural activity is unclear but vines are a possibility. Interestingly, evidence from these western trenches also seems to indicate that some form of industrial activity was taking place close by as a number of lumps of what appears to be iron slag were recovered from layers 7711 and 7724. Layer 7711 also contained part of a kiln structure. This metal-working activity appears to have been carried out in one of the disused rooms surrounding the former southern courtyard.⁵¹

Summary/Interpretation

Due to its location at the key crossing point into Butrint from its southern hinterland, the Vrina Plain bridgehead remained a natural focus in the urban centre. By the beginning of the 6th century, following a period of abandonment, the house was reoccupied and a series of new buildings was constructed, the most obvious of which was a large apsidal basilica (Fig. 6.98). Measuring c. 19.20 m by c. 15.85 m, the basilica was built out from the southern wall of the earlier apsidal hall. It partially covered the northern and eastern portico of the late Roman house and extended into the courtyard where it cut through a late 5th/early 6th-century levelling deposit that had been spread over this central area in preparation for the new build. The apse of the basilica was built over the northern niche of the inner pool.

The basilica was divided internally into a central area and two flanking aisles defined by a series of seven piers on either side of the central space, with a low stylobate wall visible at floor level connecting these. Both the eastern and western aisles were further divided, as the stylobate wall of the north portico of the earlier *domus* remained partially

visible at the southern end of these rooms. The central space was divided by a screen at the southern end of the building, the foundation of which remained *in situ*. The main space became the nave with the southern, smaller space the sanctuary. Flooring both of these spaces was a series of intricate mosaics depicting a stylised representation of the terrestrial paradise of God's creation on earth. Set within the floor of the nave were two *tabulae ansatae* carrying Greek inscriptions.

Fronting the apse and incorporated into the mosaic was the altar. Beyond, the apse was raised above the level of the floors of the basilica. This space may have been partially screened and was entered via a step. Unlike the nave and the sanctuary, the apse had a flagstone floor. Set beneath the floor appears to have been a *confessio* or relic-deposit of some kind.

Various parts of the earlier apsidal hall were remodelled at this time, the principal space becoming the entrance vestibule of the church. Two east–west walls and a north–south wall were constructed across the length and width of the earlier building, dividing it into three separate chambers. The central area became the narthex and led into the nave and aisles, while the northern part became the exonarthex, which was entered via a new triple doorway inserted into the northern wall of the room. The former western entrance of the apsidal hall was blocked in, suggesting that the new basilica was approached from the Vivari Channel. Fronting the new entrance was a courtyard constructed over the former rooms located along this side of the apsidal hall. The former apse of the hall was blocked off and seems to have been used as a cistern.

In general, the private financing of church construction formed part of a development that can be traced throughout

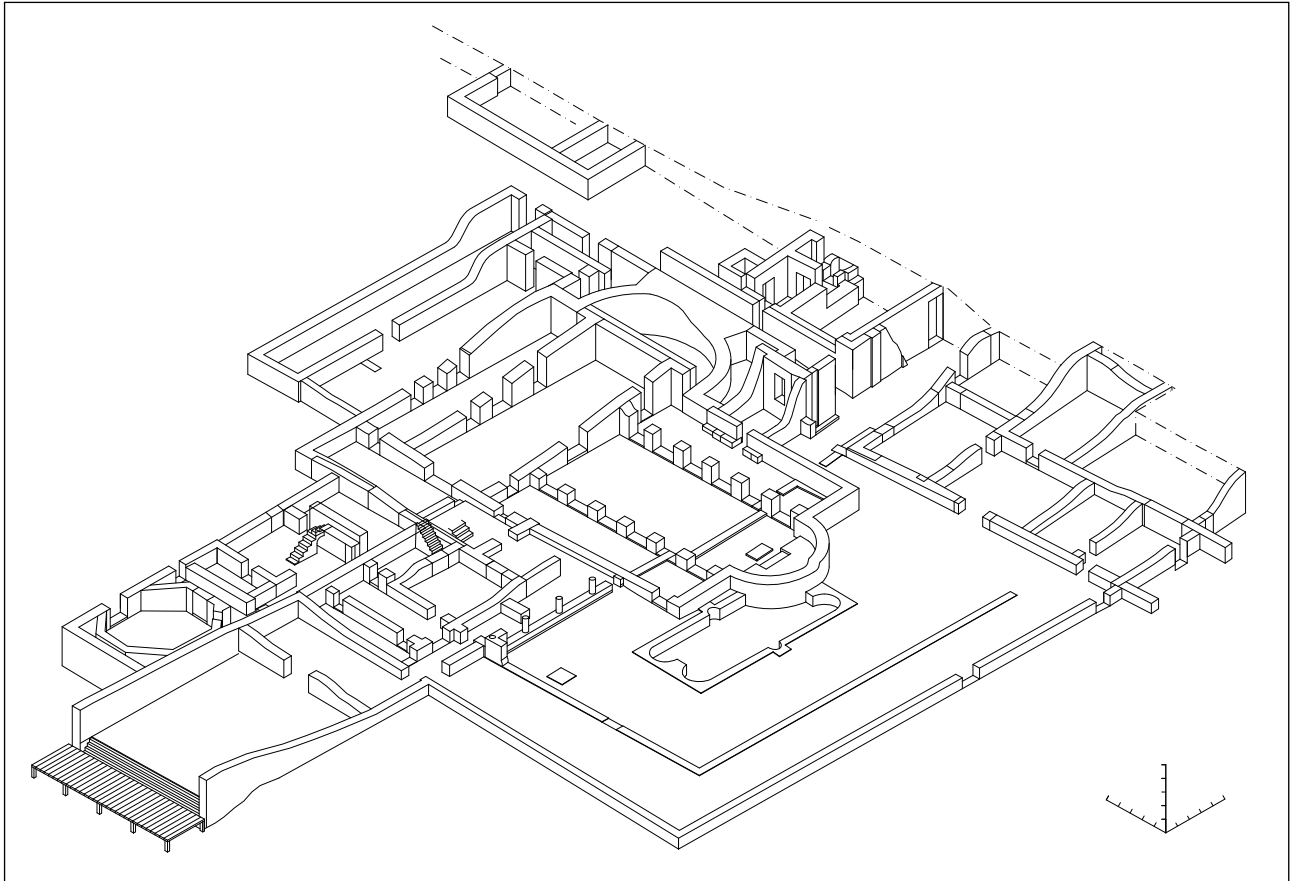


Figure 6.98. Axonometric reconstruction of the Vrina Plain settlement in Phase 7

the Mediterranean world during the 6th century AD, including the provinces of Epirus Vetus and Nova, in which numerous churches were founded by local private patrons aiming to rival the great basilicas of episcopal centres such as Nicopolis.⁵² In so doing, the benefactions became a public demonstration of élite status in much the same way the luxurious private residences had done in the centuries before.⁵³ The incomplete state of the southern dedication makes it difficult to gauge the relationship of the donors, although it is possible that they were part of the family that had originally owned the *domus*.

Along with the foundation of the church, a new two-storey building was built to the west of it. A staircase, the foundation of which abutted the basilicas' western façade, would have allowed access to a first floor that presumably formed the principal living space and reception area.⁵⁴ A door at the western end of the building gave access to the lower rooms, but these rooms, possibly storerooms, could also be accessed from the second storey as indicated by the foundation of a stair block in the lower central room. Parts of the eastern wing of the *domus* seem to have been reoccupied, the rooms being levelled over and partially sub-divided. To the northeast, the cistern was converted into a small bath-house complex. Water for the bath may have been supplied from a cistern now located in the apse of the earlier hall.

Overall the various buildings indicate that at the beginning of the 6th century, following a hiatus in its occupation, a concerted effort was undertaken by someone (possibly a family member) to re-establish the house as a focal point in the landscape (Fig. 6.99). Although the southern courtyard and surrounding rooms may not have been part of the main house any more in its reduced state, the 'new' house would still have been a conspicuous feature on the plain, especially following the addition of the basilica, the spiritual successor to the apsidal hall.

The dating of the new complex is also interesting as its construction and use straddles the period in which the new defensive enclosure wall was constructed around the lower city in Butrint. Initially this wall was thought to date to the late 5th century,⁵⁵ but this dating has recently been revised and it is now thought to date to around AD 525.⁵⁶ Although apparently poorly constructed when compared to other contemporary urban fortifications within Epirus Vetus and Epirus Nova, the wall would still have changed the way in which the city and its hinterland interacted from this time.⁵⁷

Phase 8: mid-6th century – repairs and alterations

Within a short space of time various repairs had to be made to the structure of the basilica (Fig. 6.100).

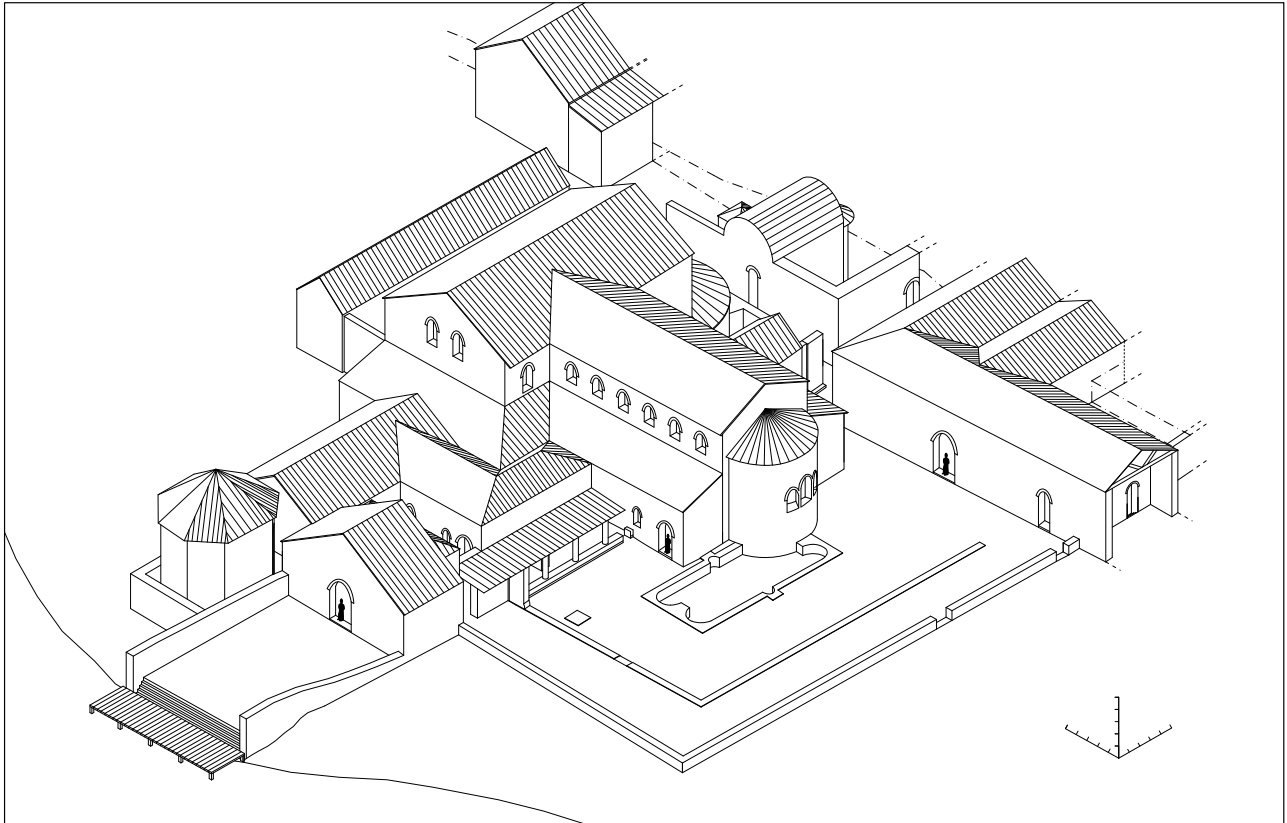


Figure 6.99. Hypothetical reconstruction of the basilica and surrounding rooms in Phase 7

The basilica, narthex and exonarthex

The mosaic floors within both the nave and sanctuary were repaired due to wear from the action of people walking on them. Continuing seismic shocks may also have destabilised the underlying softer sediments, causing the overlying mosaics to break up.⁵⁸ In the nave one such repair carried out was to the image of the large fish and surrounding eels (see Plate 11.33). The northeastern corner of the panel, including the tail of the fish, the two eels and the adjacent borders, was badly damaged. These details were restored with new *tesserae* and, although the frame had been crudely recreated, the design was replaced with plain greyish-blue stones. In the sanctuary, the southeastern corner of the central motif and the adjoining panel also seem to have been repaired (see Plate 11.28). In this case, although the colours of the *tesserae* used were slightly different, the overall design was recreated.

Structurally a series of post-holes (7417, 7418, 7419 and 7420) found cut through mosaic 3253, to the south of the chancel screen, indicate that soon after the completion of the building posts had to be set up to support the roof of the sanctuary (Fig. 6.101). The supports were only temporary, and once they were removed the holes in the mosaic were repaired. These patches generally used smaller *tesserae* than the original pavement, and although they attempted to recreate the original design, they were much more simplistic in composition, sometimes altering the forms (see Plate 11.33).⁵⁹ A fifth, larger post (3271) also seems

to have been positioned between 7417 and 7418 but due to later damage no mosaic was found sealing this cut.

Repairs to the roof also appear to have been undertaken in the small room off the east aisle, as indicated by four post-holes (3795, 3797, 3799 and 3802) cut through the make-up layer 3793 and overlying mortar spread 3792 (Fig. 6.102).⁶⁰ The largest cut was 3799, positioned just to the north of the main door into the room. This cut was slightly irregular in shape and measured 0.48×0.38 m and was 0.12 m deep. Against the northeastern side of the cut the neck of a 6th-century imported Cretan amphora had been placed as part of the backfill (3800). Two coins were found within the fill of the amphora neck (Fig. 6.103). One was an extremely corroded *nummus* dating to the 5th/6th century (SF 6164/Cat.452) while the other was a very fine *nummus* with little wear of Constantius II (AD 355–61) minted in either Thessalonica or Arles (SF 6165/Cat. 159).

Following the completion of the repairs and removal of the posts, a greenish-brown silty clay (3350) (20–50 mm thick) was spread across the room to form a new foundation level (Fig. 6.104). Pottery dating to the 5th century was recovered from layer 3350, as were ten coins, the latest of which dated to the 5th/6th century (SF 6106/Cat. 286). Along the northern side of the room an L-shaped bench (3349/3728) built of a mix of limestone and tiles bonded with a yellowish-white gritty mortar was then constructed over 3350, allowing people using the room somewhere to sit. Due to the tapering of wall 3775, the width of the

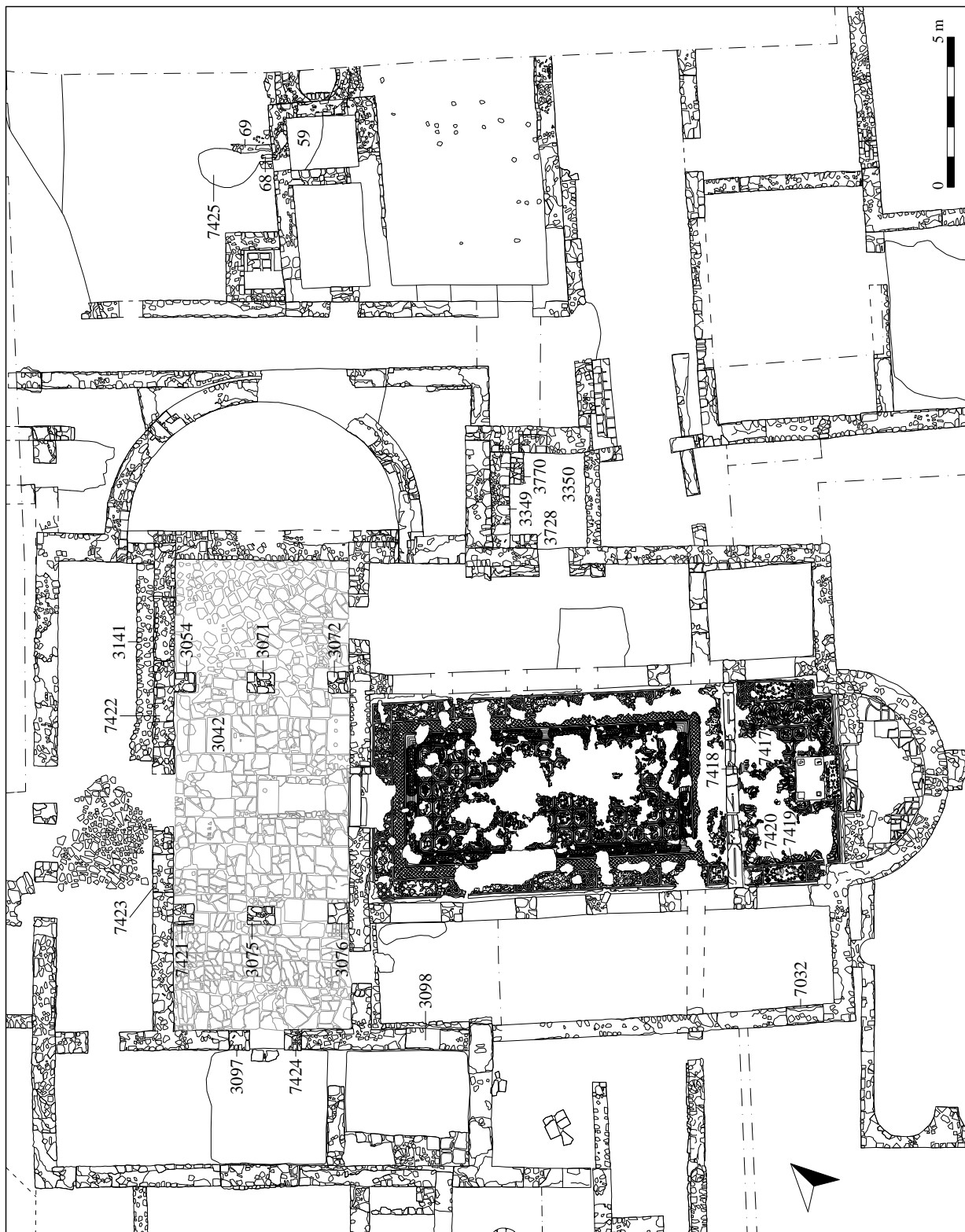


Figure 6.100. The Vrina Plain settlement showing areas of activity in Phase 8 (mid-6th century)

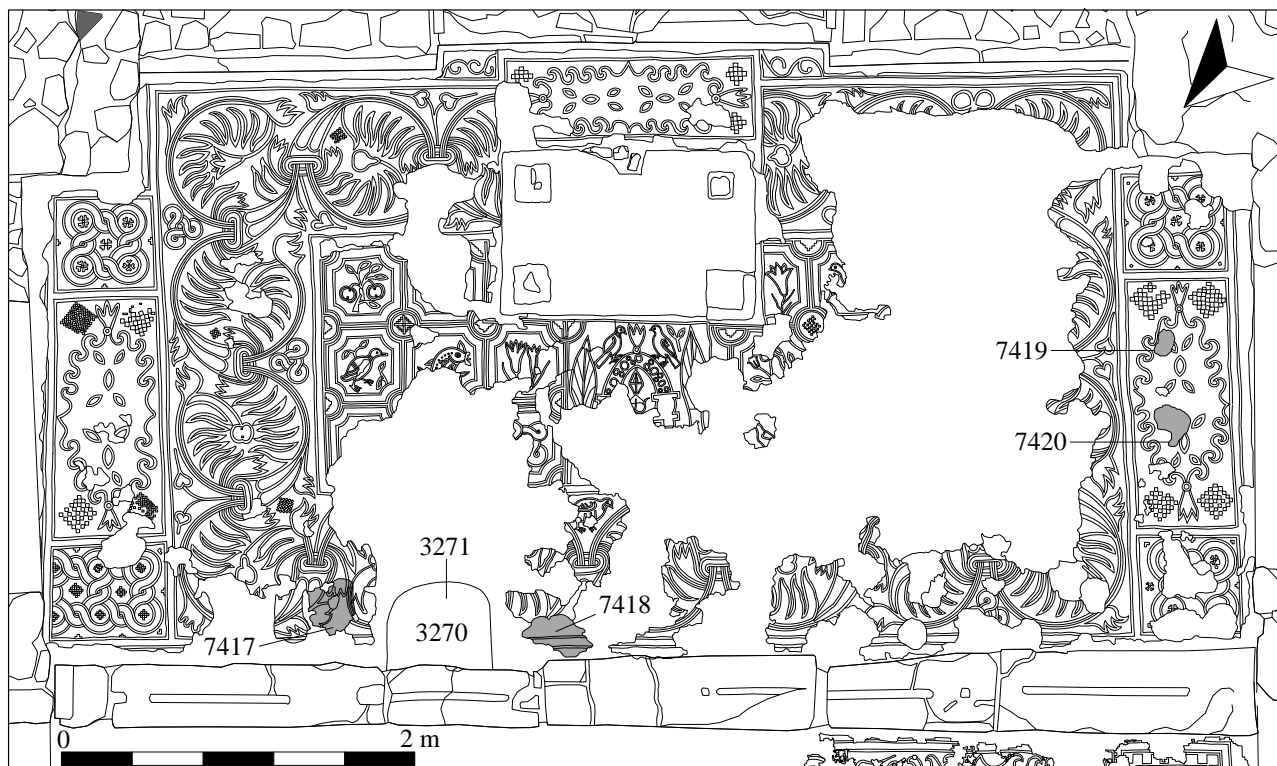


Figure 6.101. Plan showing the position of the Phase 8 temporary posts used to support the sanctuary roof

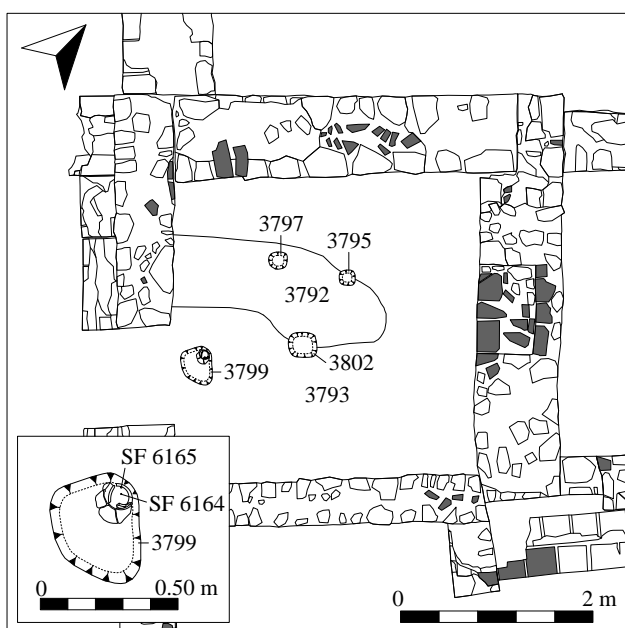


Figure 6.102. Plan of the small room located off the east aisle showing the Phase 8 temporary post-holes used to repair the room's roof

northern part of the bench varied from 0.70 m to the east and 0.56 m to the west, while the southern return of it measured 0.47 m wide. Once the bench was built a tile surface (3770) was laid over 3350 to form the new floor level of the room (Fig. 6.105). Although much of this floor



Figure 6.103. Detail of post-hole 3799 showing the 6th-century imported Cretan amphora neck placed as part of the backfill (3800) and the two coins (SF 6164, Cat 452 and SF 6165, Cat 159) within the fill of the amphora

had been removed in antiquity it would seem, from the remaining patch located between the eastern end of the bench 3349 and the northern wall of the later Phase 11 kiln structure, that the floor was made up of broken pieces of tile. As no floor was found covering the initial Phase 7 use of the room, it may be that this original floor was removed prior to the repairs and the tiles from it, although broken, were then reused to form the new surface 3770.

Further alterations to the structure of the basilica can

also be seen in the narthex where an upper floor, possibly a gallery, appears to have been inserted as indicated by six large square masonry piers (3054, 3071, 3072, 3076, 3075 and 7421) (varying from 0.66 m to 0.72 m in width) (Fig. 6.106). Aligned in two rows across the width of the narthex, the piers were solidly built using roughly squared limestone blocks bonded with a light greyish-white gritty mortar. Constructed directly over the flagstone floor of the narthex, these piers would have formed supports for vaults to carry the new floor (Fig. 6.107; see also Fig 6.26).

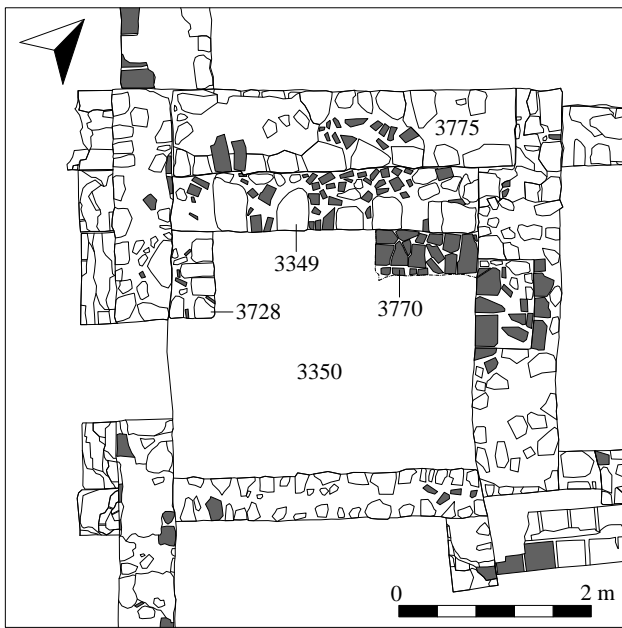


Figure 6.104. Plan of the small room located off the east aisle showing the alterations made in Phase 8

This upper floor, which may also have extended over the exonarthex, was accessed via the staircase located in the southern room of the western chamber (see above). As part of these alterations, the two secondary side doors between the narthex and the exonarthex were blocked-in (the eastern door by wall 7422 and the western door by wall 7423) such that only the central door remained accessible. The connection between these two events can clearly be seen in blocking wall 7422, as this wall and the western corner of the northeastern pier 3054 are keyed into each other. The door into the western chamber from the narthex was also altered by the insertion of two rectangular blocking walls (3097 and 7424) on either side of the door. These walls, measuring 0.68 m in length and varying in width from 0.64 m (7424) to 0.58 m (3097), were built directly



Figure 6.105. View of the alterations made to the small room located off the east aisle in Phase 8 (1 m scale)

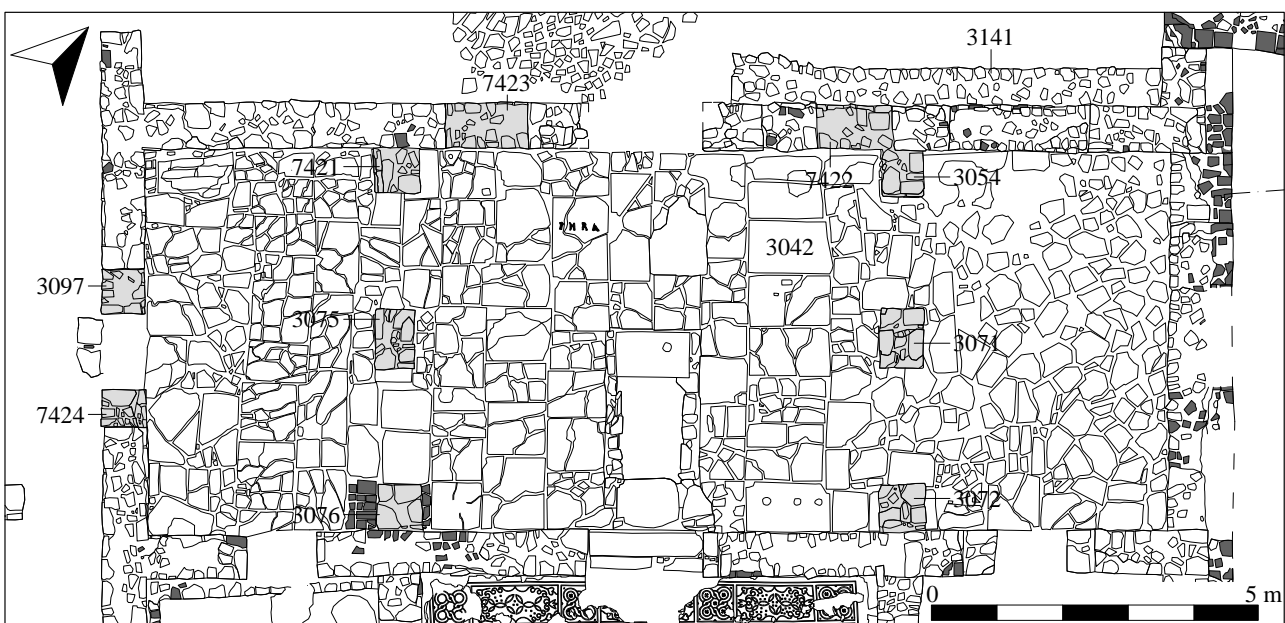


Figure 6.106. The narthex and exonarthex of the basilica in Phase 8



Figure 6.107. View of the basilica, looking east, showing the piers added to the narthex in Phase 8 (2 m scale)

over the stone paving of the narthex and reduced the width of the door to 1.16 m. It may also have been during this phase that the doors at either end of the west aisle were blocked by walls 7032 and 3098 (see Fig. 6.100).

Following the construction of these blocking walls, a new wall (3141) was built along the south side of the exonarthex. Terminating against the eastern edge of the main central door between the exonarthex and the narthex, wall 3141 measured 5.64×0.60 m and appears to be the foundation of a bench, presumably set up so that worshippers had somewhere to sit before being allowed into the main body of the basilica. Once wall 3141 was constructed a greyish-black silty clay (3884) 0.10–0.15 m thick was spread across the eastern end of the exonarthex, presumably due to the floor at this end of the room having been damaged during the construction of wall 3141. Ceramics recovered from this deposit date to the second quarter of the 6th century and include a number of fragments of Late Roman C fine wares (LRC) Type 3F as well as a variant of this type, together with a typical late 5th–6th-century local cooking pot with a convex pointed rim.⁶¹

The eastern bath-house

In the northwest corner of the bath-house, the area to the north of the Phase 7 bath-house built within the earlier cistern was raised. A layer of mid-greyish silt (4) and rubble (77) was spread across the area, presumably to counter the slumping of the underlying deposits. Mixed in with layer 4 were ceramics dating to the 5th and 6th centuries including a fragment of LRC 3F. A coin dating to the reign of Justin I (AD 518–27) (SF 2353/Cat. 322) was also found in this layer.⁶²

The bath-house itself was also altered during this period (Fig. 6.108). Due to the apparent inefficiency of the original firing arrangements, a hole (70) was crudely hacked into the side of wall 9 (Fig. 6.109). Against the hole, a brick firing chamber 1.28 m long with a corbelled vault (69) was constructed. To improve the draught of

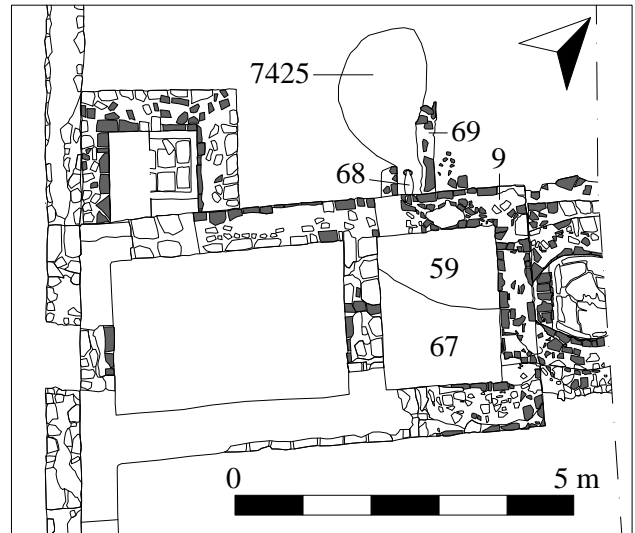


Figure 6.108. The cistern bath-house in Phase 8



Figure 6.109. View of praefurnium (70) crudely hacked into the side of wall 9 (1 m scale)

the new *praefurnium* an early 5th-century North African *spatheion* amphora (68) (Keay 25/26 form), the foot of which had been broken off, was inserted at the base of it in an attempt to provide sufficient draught to circulate the air (Fig. 6.110).⁶³ This would seem to have worked as evidence from the floor of the hot room suggests numerous firings had occurred; the sub-floor (67) was covered with a horizon of ash and carbon some 0.12 m thick (59) while around the mouth of the *praefurnium* a deposit of grey-

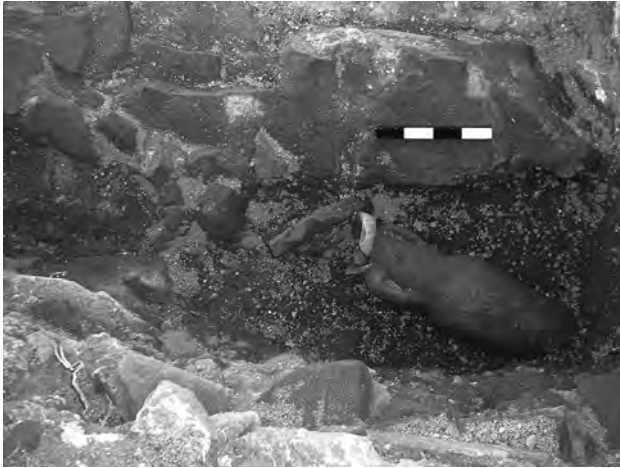


Figure 6.110. Detail of the early 5th-century North African spatheion amphora 68 (Keay 25/26 form) inserted at the base of the praefurnium in an attempt to provide sufficient draught to circulate the air (20 cm scale)

black ashy silt (7425) had built up stretching 1.20 m to the north.

Burial

As well as these structural alterations, a burial (3604) was inserted in the open area (Room 7) of the former east wing of the *domus*, cut through layer 3457/3462 (Fig. 6.111; see also Figs 6.57c and 6.66). Orientated east–west, the burial 3604 is thought to be Late Antique in date as it was a classic ‘*cappuccina*’ burial in which the body, possibly of a young child (3568), was covered with a pitched roof tile (3591).⁶⁴ Due to later truncation only the lower legs and some bones of the left foot survived at the western end of the grave.

Dating

Dating these alterations is difficult but the material from the southern end of the exonarthex would seem to suggest it occurred sometime in the early to mid-6th century (c. AD 525–50). Across the site, fragments of similarly dated ceramics have been found from several layers.⁶⁵ One of the latest pieces, from layer 24, dates to c. AD 540–50 (see Volume 6.3, Chapter 5). Taken together, these indicate the Vrina Plain complex continued to be a focus of occupation up to at least the middle of the 6th century.

Summary/Interpretation

Over time the basilica underwent a series of repairs and alterations. The mosaic paving in the nave and sanctuary was repaired due to wear while soon after being completed the roof over the sanctuary became unstable. In order to support it whilst repairs were carried out, a series of posts was set up just to the south of the chancel screen. Once

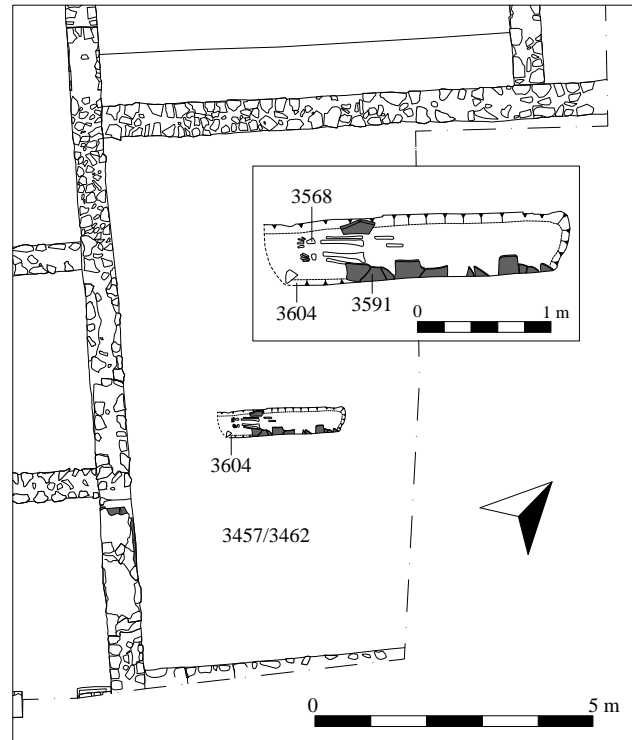


Figure 6.111. Phase 8 grave 3604

mended, the supports were removed and the holes in the sanctuary mosaic repaired, although these patches used smaller *tesserae* and often simplified and slightly altered the design.

Soon after the building was completed a second storey, possibly a gallery, was inserted over the narthex, as indicated by six piers built across the width of the narthex. This second storey, which may also have extended over the exonarthex, was accessed by the staircase located in the southern room of the western chamber.

The roof of the small room attached to the east aisle also shows signs of having been repaired. Following this, the level of the room was raised and a new floor, made up of broken tiles, was laid. In order to allow those people using the room somewhere to sit a bench was constructed around the northern and western sides of the room.

In the narthex the door to the western chamber was narrowed while those either side of the central door from the exonarthex were blocked. The door at the southern end of the west aisle also seems to have been blocked as part of these alterations, as does the door at the northern end of the aisle leading to the western chamber. These alterations were not restricted to the basilica alone as a new *praefurnium* was added to the cistern bath-house.

Phase 9: late 6th century – burials, fire and abandonment

How long the Vrina Plain basilica and house complex remained in use for is unclear. Various fragments of

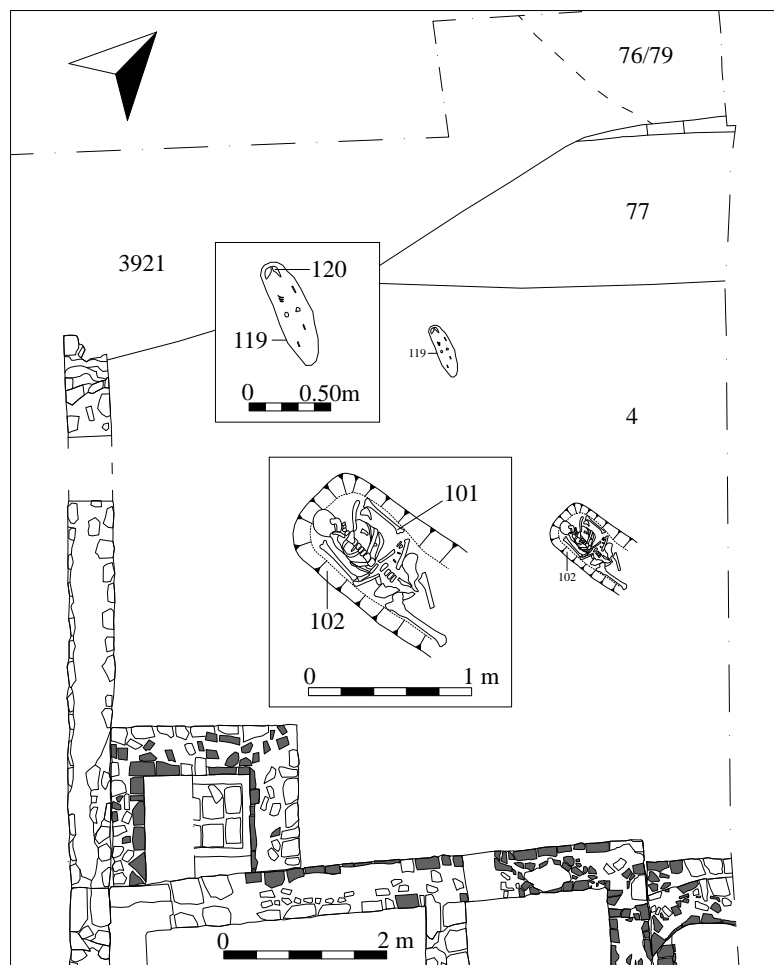


Figure 6.112. Phase 9 graves 119 and 102



Figure 6.113. Grave 102 (20 cm scale)

mid- to late 6th-century ceramics were found pressed into layers 24, 3348, 3590, 3928, 7312, 3707, 3364 and 3884, suggesting some sort of activity on the site continued to at least the end of the 6th century.⁶⁶ A number of burials thought to date to this period also imply the complex was still in use at this time.

Burials

Two of these burials were found in the open area to the north of the bath-house built in the cistern (Fig. 6.112). Grave 119 contained the badly preserved body of a young child thought to be 4–5 years old (120), while grave 102, situated just to the southeast, was that of a 20–25-year-old male (101) (Fig. 6.113). This individual had been buried in a supine position with both arms folded across the chest and legs extended.⁶⁷ In both cases the cuts for the graves were not visible initially; the burials only became clear when skeletons 120 and 101 were revealed after the removal of layers 4, 77 and 29/108.⁶⁸ However, a rim fragment of a mid- to late 6th-century LRA 2.6 amphora found within grave fill 100 covering skeleton 101 provides a rough dating sequence for the burials and implies the graves had been cut through these levelling layers.



Figure 6.114. Detail of the fire-cracked flagstones across the western side of the narthex (1 m scale)

A further, possibly contemporary, burial (91) was found to the north of these burials. Partially cut through the mortar sub-floor 93 of the former northern room (Room G) of the Phase 3b bath-house, grave 91 contained the fragmentary remains of the skeleton (90) of an adolescent. Again the cut had been missed but the rubble within the backfill of the grave (89) suggests it was cut from layer 87.

Fire

At some point the basilica seems to have been partially destroyed by fire. The large flagstones in the western part of the narthex are criss-crossed by fractures that appear to have been caused by intense heat, while the surrounding walls are also heavily cracked in a manner indicating fire damage (Fig. 6.114). This is suggestive of a fire, possibly on the second floor, bringing the wooden timbers of the upper floor down onto the flagstones of the ground floor. The northern end of the mosaic in the nave also shows signs of fire damage.

Due to later reoccupation of the site the cause of the fire is unclear. The surrounding rooms of the house, however, do not show any sign of fire damage, suggesting whatever caused it was localised to the basilica only. The damage caused by the fire does not appear to have been repaired and instead it seems the basilica, along with the house, was abandoned.

Summary/Interpretation

The complex on the Vrina Plain seems to have been occupied up to the end of the 6th century whereupon it was abandoned, possibly due to a fire, thereby ending nearly six hundred years of almost continuous occupation of the waterfront settlement that had sprung up on the southern side of the city and which, in its various phases, reflected the changing social, political and economic patterns of the

time. The basilica does not seem to have been repaired but was left to collapse gradually.

Over the next two centuries the buildings on the Vrina Plain slowly decayed but despite this, the ruins remained a visible marker and it may have been because of this that the complex would once again be reoccupied in the middle of the 9th century when it seems to have become the ‘new’ Butrint.

Notes

- 1 A further coin, thought to date from AD 518–65, came from context 7100 (SF 6378/Cat. 327). Rather than dating the transformation of the site, this coin seems more likely to date the use of the site.
- 2 To infill a gap at the eastern end of the foundation a further, smaller block had been positioned against the western face of pier 3284.
- 3 Although no evidence of the actual screen survived *in situ*, a fragment of decorated limestone made up of overlapping semicircular tiles/scales, cut in relief, was found in the Phase 11 surface of the western aisle (7094); this maybe a remnant of the original screen (SF 6365) (see Volume 6.2, Chapter 6, 12.27, Fig. 6.73).
- 4 I am grateful to P. Papadopoulou for this translation.
- 5 When deposit 3988/7166 was removed and the portico underneath was revealed it was noticeable that no floor surface was found associated with the portico. As it is assumed this space would originally have had a mosaic pavement, its absence would seem to suggest the floor had been lifted prior to the construction of the basilica, the *tesserae* potentially having been reused in the new mosaic pavements created in the nave and sanctuary of the basilica.
- 6 Initially this door may have been used by the builders of the southern extension who would have needed a way to get to the mortar being mixed in the inner pool.
- 7 Michel 2007, 590–3.
- 8 Similarly decorated tiles were also found just to the south of this room within two contemporary levelling layers (3928 and 3869) that are associated with the overall changes to this area following the construction of the basilica.
- 9 Two further mid-4th-century coins (SFs 6181/Cat. 177 and 6194/Cat. 202) were recovered from a lens of burning (3804) mixed within 3337.
- 10 This layer extended through the room’s western doorway and appears to be a continuation of layer 3988/7166 seen in the east aisle.
- 11 Hernandez 2017, 121, note 98, suggests ...PHRA forms the last four letters of a Latin inscription referring to the name Epalphra, a lady who probably paid for the original paving.
- 12 Assuming it did become a holding tank, the fact that there was no evidence that the sides of the apse had ever been lined with hydraulic plaster may seem odd; the floor appeared to have been smoothed directly up against the edge of the wall. Such a lining may not have been necessary, however, as the construction of the apse appears to have been very solid and the mortar between the tiles had been smoothed to create an almost flat surface. As a result, the decision may have been made that the sides were strong enough to contain the amount of water that needed to be stored in the cistern without the need and expense of a lining.

- 13 Unfortunately the connection between wall 1165 and wall 1180 had been truncated by the construction of the 1960s drainage ditch.
- 14 An intrusive fragment of an LRC 3F dating to AD 525–50 was found in layer 3885. This piece is almost certainly from the overlying layer 3884 in which a number of other similar LRC 3F fragments have been found.
- 15 This ‘regeneration’ was not restricted to the former house alone, as to the east the area opposite the Temple mausoleum also shows signs of reoccupation at this time, with a series of roughly built walls constructed partially over the line of the road (see Chapter 8).
- 16 By the late 5th century the design of bath-houses appears to have changed, with a move away from the large communal baths to smaller, more private buildings in which one bathed alone. This seems to have been partly due to the cost of upkeep of the larger baths and the constant demands on the water supply made by these often vast structures. It would also seem to have been a result of the growing influence of Christian thought, which disapproved of the lascivious excesses reported to have taken place in the baths. As Yegül has noted (1995, 317): ‘the Church was ready to accept bathing if the component of pleasure was taken out of it – that is, if bathing was reduced to a functional, hygienic and medicinal activity.’
- 17 Unfortunately all traces of this floor and any infilling deposits, which may have held important stratigraphic dating evidence, were removed by excavations undertaken in August 2002 by the Albanian Institute of Archaeology (AIA).
- 18 The area directly north of this bath had been excavated by the Albanian Institute of Archaeology and it is possible they may have accidentally removed such a channel.
- 19 At the time of excavation these post-holes were recorded as underlying layer 24 and were thought to be cut from the level of the original mortar floor (25) of Room A. However, as the features are generally only 40 mm in depth it seems more likely only the bases of the cuts were revealed and that, due to the nature of the fill matching the surrounding deposits, the actual level of the cuts was missed. A similar problem in distinguishing the levels from which post-holes were cut was also noted in the Triconch excavations (cf. Bowden, Culwick *et al.* 2011, 151, notes 3 and 4).
- 20 It may have been necessary to raise the ground level at this time in order to combat the rising water.
- 21 Context 3929 is thought to be a continuation of 3921. The connection between these deposits was removed by the clearance excavations undertaken by the Albanian Institute of Archaeology.
- 22 Rim fragments of a large LRA 2 were recovered from both these layers.
- 23 This levelling seems to have occurred at the same time as the chapel in the Monument area was being constructed as a piece of a handmade casserole dish dating to the first half of the 2nd century from layer 108 was found to join with a similar piece from layer 1503 found infilling the chapel’s apse (see Chapter 9 and Volume 6.3, Chapter 9). These pieces probably came from layer 1520, the deposit through which the foundation of the Monument chapels’ apse was dug.
- 24 Layer 3921 also partially covered the room’s southern flue. Infilling this small space was a compact rubble deposit (95) that was either deliberately dumped here or is the remains of the collapsed archway over the flue (cf. Chapter 4, Figs 4.99 and 4.100).
- 25 Similar clay horizons were also found overlying the sub-floors of two of the hot rooms of the bath-house from the villa at Diaporit following the removal of the *pilae* stacks from these rooms (Bowden and Përzhita 2004b).
- 26 Running across the width of the room, these voids are thought to indicate the position of two robbed-out wall lines associated with the initial settlement on the Vrina Plain and are assumed to have opened up as a result of the earth tremors in the preceding decades destabilising the backfill of these cuts.
- 27 Along with sealing the new drain and the remains of the mosaic pavement, layer 7403 also infilled cut 3849, indicating that the pipe used to supply the water to the central pool in the courtyard had been removed as part of these changes, presumably when the mosaic was lifted.
- 28 Similar pieces of decorated tile were also recovered from the underlying deposit 3928 directly inside the former doorway.
- 29 An intrusive fragment of an ARS Hayes 103 stamped base thought to date from the second quarter of the 6th century was also found in layer 7062.
- 30 Across the centre of the room and extending along the eastern side of it were a number of other, smaller post-holes and stake-holes. At the time of excavation these were said to be contemporary with the larger cuts. However, given the shallow depth of these features (c. 50–100 mm) it seems more likely that these relate to the Phase 11 (medieval) occupation of this room when a small kiln was constructed in the southeast corner (see Chapter 7, Fig. 7.64).
- 31 These deposits also included some residual elements as mixed in with the pottery recovered from layer 7116 was a handle from the Portuguese Dressel 14 amphora (7258) used as part of the packing to support the floor of the earlier room. Layer 3496 produced a shoulder fragment of a pierced jug with a wavy combed decoration on it that is thought to be medieval in date. This intrusive medieval piece probably came from the overlying layer 3476 found sealing the entire room.
- 32 SF 6518/Cat. 135, SF 6520/Cat. 183, SF 6532c/Cat. 247, SF 6521/Cat. 254, SF 6531/Cat. 262, SF 6526/Cat. 264, SF 6538/Cat. 267, SF 6524/Cat. 269, SF 6530/Cat. 272, SF 6527/Cat. 274, SF 6537/Cat. 315, SF 6528/Cat. 375, SF 6534/Cat. 376, SF 6532e/Cat. 377, SF 6532d/Cat. 378, SF 6519/440, SF 6523/Cat. 442, SF 6525/Cat. 443, SF 6535/Cat. 444, SF 6516/Cat. 493, SF 6529/Cat. 494, SF 6532a/Cat. 495 and SF 6532b/Cat. 496.
- 33 Layer 3540 is also thought to have been partially mixed with this collapsed *pisé* material.
- 34 A further pot join was found between 3462 and the earlier Phase 5 layer 3498 (see Volume 6.3, Chapter 4). The mixing of this intrusive piece in 3498 must have occurred during these alterations.
- 35 See Volume 6.3, Chapter 5 Fig. 5.7.6.
- 36 Layer 3736 also contained some intrusive 9th- to 10th-century pottery. This later material probably became mixed into this layer in the succeeding Phase 11 when this area became used as a cemetery (see Chapter 7).
- 37 Due to time constraints these features were not excavated.
- 38 This wall was initially thought to be two separate structures due to a crack towards its northern end. However, deeper excavation demonstrated that they were one structure with the northern end simply having slumped and fallen away.

- 39 Layer 2092 also contained pottery dating to the first or second half of the 6th century (see Volume 6.3, Chapter 5). Rather than dating the deposit, this material shows the room continued be used in the succeeding phase (Phase 8).
- 40 Polci 2003, 79–109.
- 41 The 5th/6th-century ceramics recovered from 3910 were probably pressed into this layer during this construction phase (as noted in Chapter 5, note 16).
- 42 Only the eastern side of the pit was revealed (c. 1.35 × 0.85 m) as the western edge of the feature continued beyond the western section.
- 43 The lining was restricted to the northern side of the cut and it must be assumed this damage occurred when the feature was dismantled.
- 44 See Volume 6.3, Chapter 5, Fig. 5.10.2 and Plate 3.3. The amphora neck was removed as part of layer 3993, the deposit found infilling the cut after the oven/hearth had fallen out of use.
- 45 Bowden, Francis, Gilkes and Lako 2011, 78; 98–9, figs. 3.80–82.
- 46 Again this is thought to have been caused by the liquefaction of the softer, sandier deposits edging the channel. The western room of the marine entrance that the octagonal room abutted can also be seen to have slumped at this western end.
- 47 Twenty fragments of Early Venetian pottery dating to the 15th–16th century were also recovered from layer 2098, suggesting this ground surface remained open for a long period.
- 48 Eight fragments of early medieval pottery have also been recorded from layer 3868, covering the period from the late 7th/early 8th to the late 9th/early 10th century. However, these pieces are thought to be intrusive and probably came from the overlying layer 3303. Layers 3303 and 3868 may have become slightly mixed as at the time 3303 was initially excavated (in 2005), the lower part of this deposit was waterlogged. The layer was therefore not fully excavated until the following season (2006) but the attempts to remove layer 3303 during 2005 season probably resulted in the medieval material becoming pressed into the upper part of layer 3868.
- 49 It was probably during this period of activity that a concave rim of a casserole dish dating to the late 5th/6th century became mixed in with layer 7806.
- 50 See Livarda (Volume 6.2, Chapter 12) for a discussion of the archaeobotanical results from the excavations.
- 51 Evidence of metal working has also been identified from contemporary levels at the Triconch Palace, as indicated by a series of small kilns and hearths located in several of the derelict and dilapidated rooms of the southern wing (cf. Bowden, Francis *et al.* 2011, 87–8). Similar small-scale industrial activity may also be located in the as-yet unexcavated rooms of the Vrina *domus* fronting the inlet channel. Located close to a source of water these may initially have been set up to produce the tools and materials required to the construct the basilica.
- 52 Bowden 2003.
- 53 Bowden 2008, 175; Bowden and Mitchell 2004, 122–5.
- 54 For a discussion of two-storey dwellings on episcopal residences see Polci 2003, 90–1. A slightly later 6th-century two-storey building in which the lower floor was thought to have been a storeroom and the upper floor the residential area accessed by an exterior staircase was excavated in the Merchant's House next to the Triconch Palace in Butrint (see Bowden, Cerova, Crowson and Vaccaro 2011, 193–7).
- 55 Bowden *et al.* 2002; Andrews *et al.* 2004, 128–32; Martin 2004, 93–5.
- 56 Bowden, Cerova, Crowson and Vaccaro 2011, 175.
- 57 Bowden, Cerova, Crowson and Vaccaro 2011, 181.
- 58 The damage caused by continuing earth tremors at this time can be seen clearly in the Acropolis basilica. This building was abandoned in the mid-6th century following the destruction of its eastern triconch, the central and southern apses having collapsed down the edge of the acropolis slope (see Greenslade, Leppard and Logue 2013, 62).
- 59 The repairs to the mosaic are discussed in Chapter 11.
- 60 As well as these four post-holes there were possibly others related to these repairs that now cannot be seen due to the later benches built around the sides of the room.
- 61 See Volume 6.3, Chapter 5. Similar examples of the cooking pot are known from the Triconch layer 1152 (see Reynolds forthcoming).
- 62 Context 4 also contained some intrusive 10th–11th-century pottery sherds. These probably became mixed into the layer during Phase 11 when a new building was constructed within this area (see Chapter 7).
- 63 This amphora matched those used to form the drain 7027.
- 64 Similar contemporary 'cappuccina' burials were also found within a number of the southern rooms of the Phase 8 (c. AD 525–50) and Phase 10 (c. AD 575–650) Triconch Palace excavations (Bowden, Francis, Gilkes and Lako 2011, 88; 115).
- 65 Contexts 4, 24, 7062, 3513, 7096, 3348, 7060, 2092, and 3492.
- 66 These included a battered LRC 3G/10A possibly dating to c. AD 550–75 from 3348, fragments of LRA 2 with wavy line combing dating to the end of the 6th century in layers 24, 7312, 3590 and 3928, and pieces of LRA 2.6 dating from the mid- to late 6th century from 3707, 3364 and 3884 (see Volume 6.3, Chapter 5).
- 67 The eastern end of grave 102 was accidentally dug away during the 2002 excavation season. The lower legs and feet of skeleton 101 were also removed at this time.
- 68 The site records note that the composition of the grave fills 121 and 100 matched those of the levelling layers; this partially explains how the graves were missed.

7 7th–13th century AD: a Byzantine central-place and its aftermath

Simon Greenslade

This chapter describes the archaeological deposits and structures forming Phases 10 to 16 on the Vrina Plain. These phases reflect the semi-abandonment of the area during the 7th to early 9th centuries; a major reoccupation when the area became the ‘new’ Butrint between the mid-9th to mid-10th century; its subsequent abandonment apart from some small-scale seasonal activity from the late 10th to 12th century; and finally the development of swamp and wetlands from the 13th to the 20th century.

Phase 10: 7th to early 9th century – abandonment

For over two centuries the buildings on the Vrina Plain appear to have slowly decayed and in time a dark-grey silt gradually built up over some areas (Fig. 7.1). Some parts of the complex may, however, have still been in use as a noticeable quantity of early medieval ceramics has been recovered from the site.

The courtyard and northwest corner

A dark greyish-brown silt layer (3340/3345/3782/3791/

3855) (0.20 m thick) gradually built up over the courtyard, partially sealing the inner pool. It also covered the western wall of the earlier courtyard (wall 3377) and the square foundation block (7022) and (as 3219) extended across the western end of the north portico. Furthermore, this layer (as 7902) extended over the line of the south portico, sealing the stylobate wall 7908 and the rooms beyond.

Unlike the eastern range, the structures along the western side of the complex appear to have disappeared by this time. As noted in the description of Phase 7, both the marine entrance and the octagonal tower had been prone to subsidence as they were built on the softer sedimentary deposits fronting the edge of the inlet channel and it seems that in the intervening period, following the abandonment of the basilica from the mid-6th century, these buildings deteriorated further as a result of this. Debris from these buildings soon built up in the rooms to the north of them (layer 7148). This layer also continued through the southeast door of the octagonal room. Prior to the build-up of this layer, an unsuccessful attempt was made to remove the door’s threshold stone, but the northern end of the stone broke off and the southern end was left in place.

With these buildings in various states of disrepair,

Table 7.1. Overview of the development of the Vrina Plain settlement: Phases 10–16

<i>Phase</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Summary</i>
10	7th to early 9th century	Minimal occupation/activity
11	Mid-9th–mid-10th century	Site re-occupied as residence of a Byzantine official. Possible industrial role as indicated by number of kilns
12	Late 10th–11th century	Building abandoned and quarried for stone. Burials interred
13	11th–12th century	Periodic re-use: small-scale industrial activity centred on eastern apse. Devotional use centred on southern apse. Post-built structure constructed in courtyard
14	Late 12th–13th century	Abandoned: wall of the southern apse collapses and the site plundered for any usable stone. Dark soils build up across the site.
15	13th century	Series of burials interred within ruins. Rock pile accumulates at edge of field, dumped over ruins where land unworkable
16	Late 13th century onwards	Wetland conditions and virtual abandonment of area until reclamation of plain in 1960s

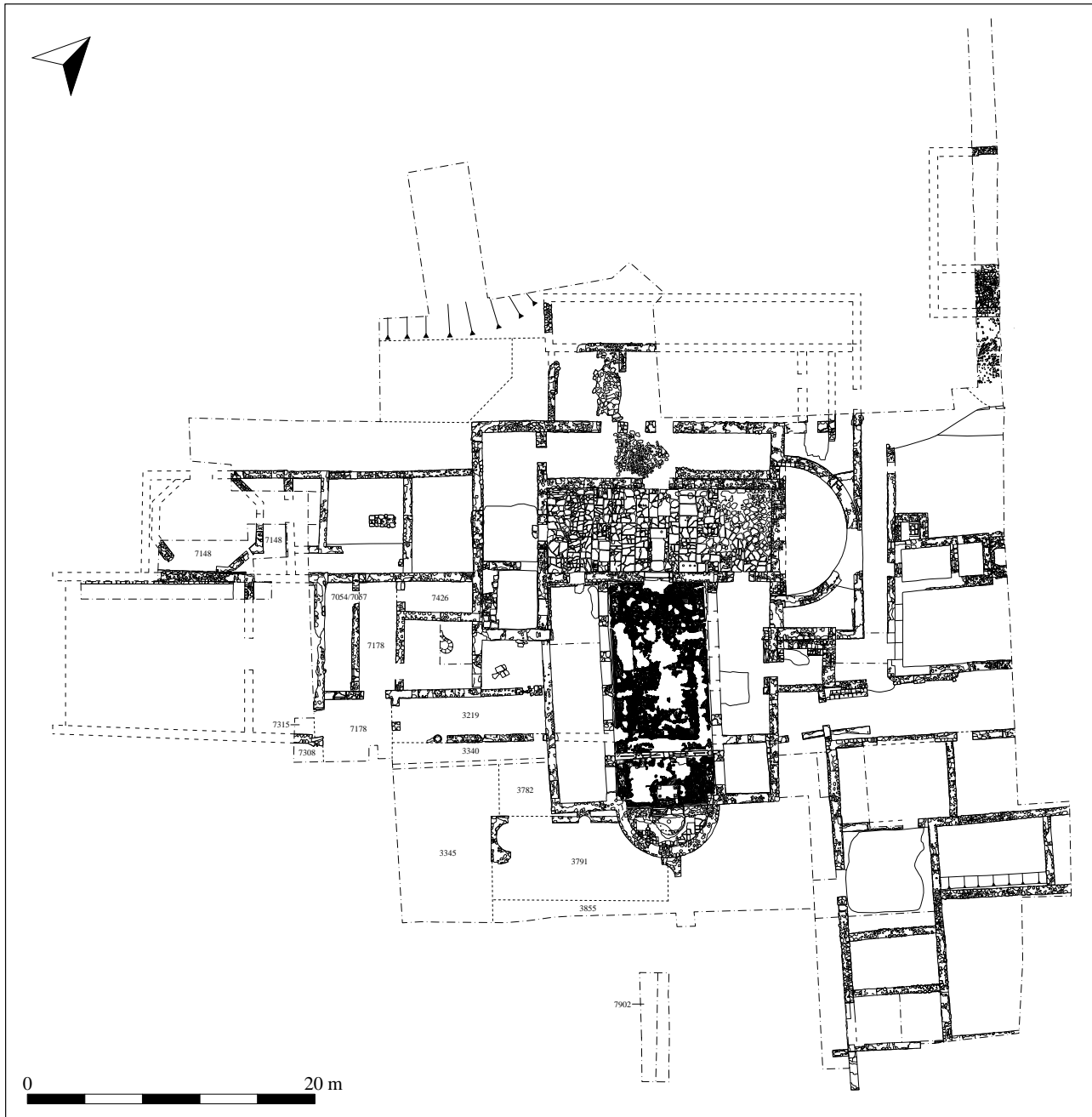


Figure 7.1. The Vrina Plain settlement showing areas of activity in Phase 10 (7th to early 9th century)

a dark greyish-brown silty clay (7178/7308) built up across the area fronting the former marine entrance. This layer, which is thought to be a continuation of layer 3219/3855/3340/3345/3791 from the courtyard, partially sealed the building's eastern wall and extended (as layer 7315) through the door into its eastern room. It also extended through the eastern doorway in wall 3316 and covered the space beyond, while to the east it merged with layer 3340 in the north portico. A similar dark greyish-brown silty clay (7054/7057) also built up over the corridor along the eastern side of the entrance building, the western edge of the deposit partially covering the eastern side of wall (7201) of the building. At the northern end of the space

this layer (7054/7057) extended through the doorway in wall 7292 and merged with 7178 beyond.

To the east, the small room with the external staircase that had accessed the two-storey building at the western end of the basilica had become infilled with a matching dark greyish-brown silty clay (7426) that appears to be a continuation of layer 7178. The staircase had been dismantled prior to this since the clay layer sealed the stairs' foundation block 7045.

Although these deposits contained a range of residual Roman ceramics, the layers across the courtyard (3219, 3340 and 3791) also contained a number of early medieval ceramics mixed within them. Further fragments of pottery

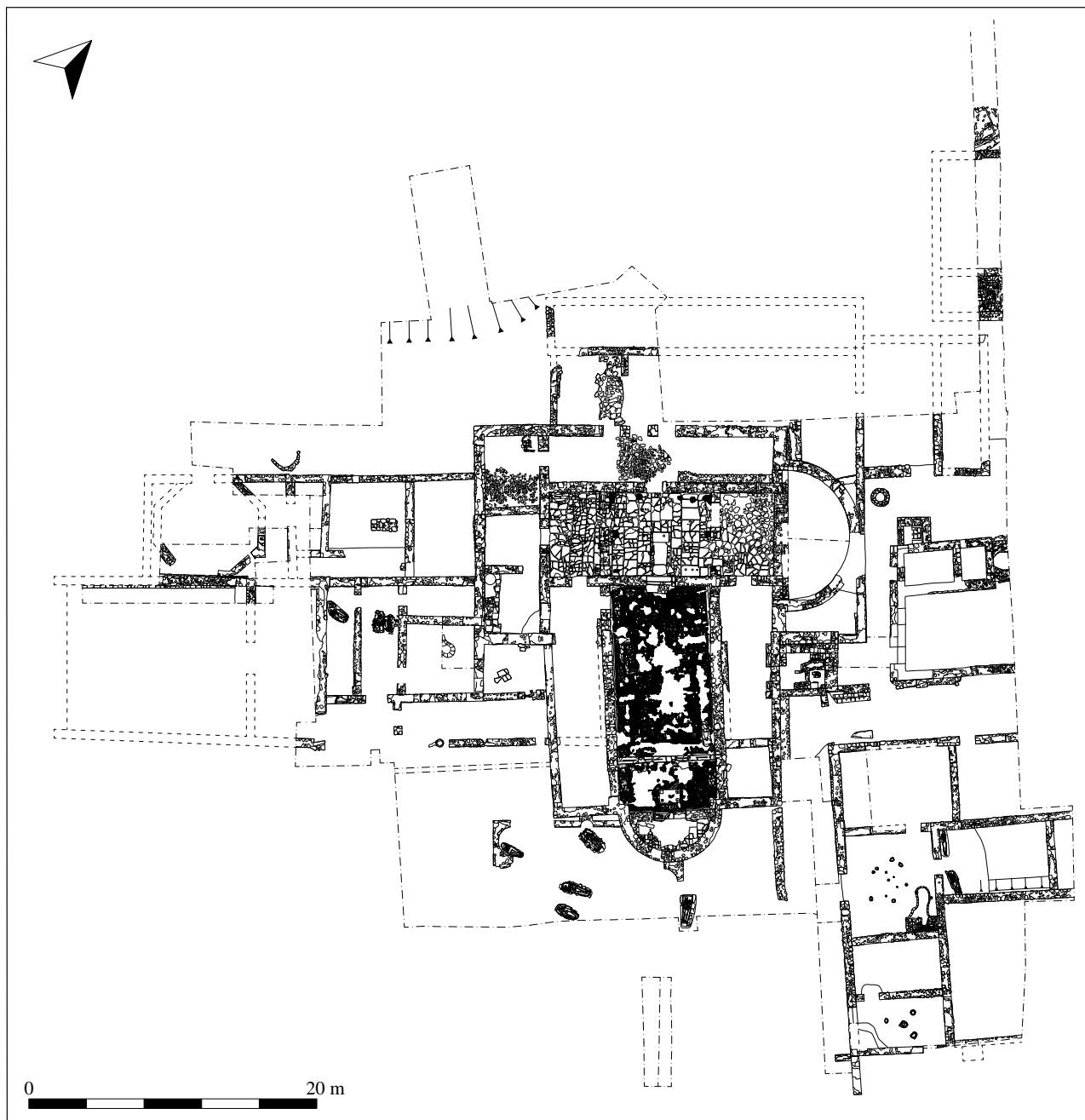


Figure 7.2. The Vrina Plain settlement showing areas of activity in Phase 11 (mid-9th to mid-10th century)

from the 7th, 8th and 9th centuries have been recovered from other layers across the site. These occurred either in Late Antique contexts,¹ or residually in contexts associated with either the reoccupation of the area in Phase 11,² or its subsequent abandonment from Phase 12 onwards.³ With the exception of layers 3333 and 3340, which only contained medieval pottery, all these contexts contained a range of material spanning both the Roman and medieval periods. No discrete early medieval contexts were identified. However, it should be noted that out of a total of 2134 diagnostic medieval sherds recovered from the Vrina Plain excavations, pottery dating to the early medieval period (c. late 7th/8th to late 9th/early 10th century)

accounted for 16% of the total assemblage. This quantity is especially notable when compared to the combined Triconch and Merchant's House excavations, where such pottery constituted only 1% of the total from an assemblage consisting of 15,585 diagnostic sherds (see Volume 6.2, Chapter 1).

Such a large amount of early medieval material is unlikely to have arrived on site accidentally as there are no levelling/make-up layers associated with the later use of the complex and while some early pieces may have been heirlooms or gifts belonging to the owner of the later house (see below), these would have been few in number. The presence of this early material would therefore

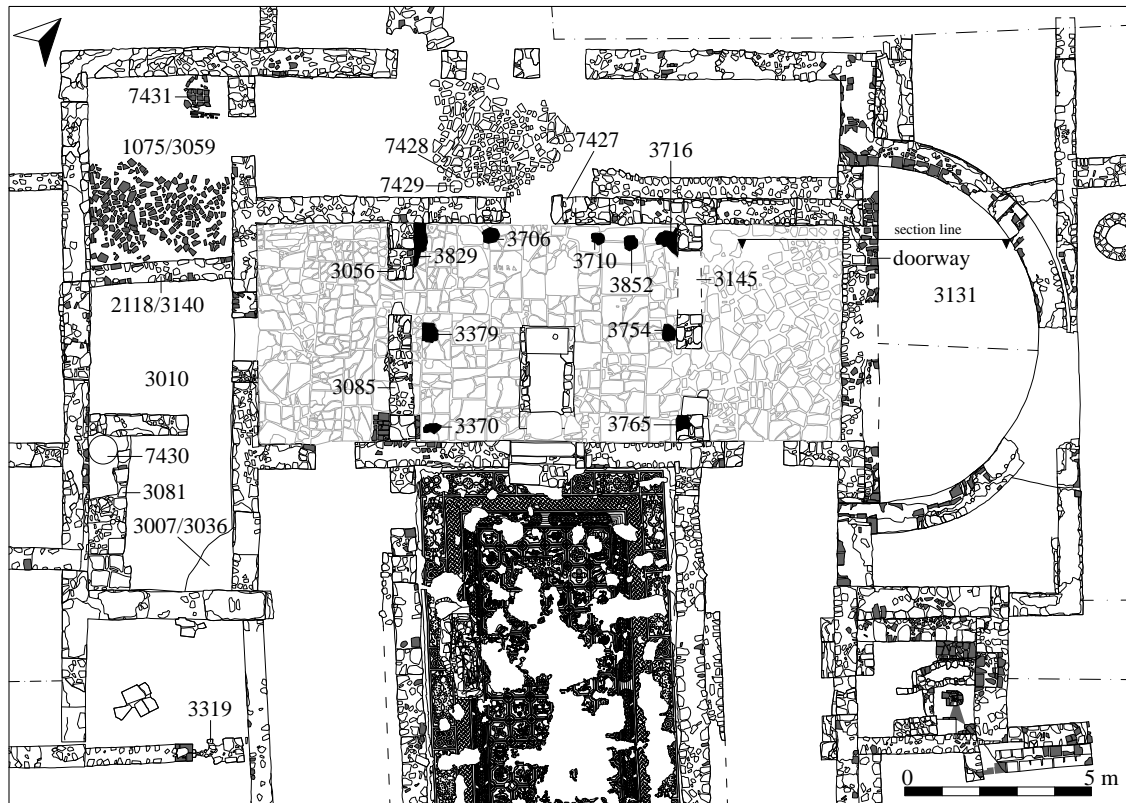


Figure 7.3. The Phase 11 house

seem to suggest there was some sort of activity taking place within the ruins of the late Roman house during the 7th–9th century. Unfortunately, due to subsequent alterations associated with the use of the site from the mid-9th century, identifying any obvious structural elements relating to these centuries is difficult. Without further archaeological evidence, the nature of this occupation can only be speculated upon.

Summary/Interpretation

The archaeological evidence suggests that from the mid-6th century activity on the Vrina Plain diminished. However, this is not to say the area was completely abandoned as the discovery of 7th–9th-century pottery suggests there may have been some form of small-scale activity within the ruins. Unfortunately the extent of this use is difficult to understand at the moment as no occupation horizons relating to this period have so far been revealed. The possibility of some sort of continuous occupation throughout this period cannot be ignored and the continued use of the site may also explain subsequent events, when, from the mid-9th century, the Vrina Plain became the ‘new’ Butrint.

Phase 11: mid-9th to mid-10th century – the ‘New’ Butrint

The focus of the new activity was once more centred on the basilica and the surrounding buildings. These structures

were repaired and a new complex, comprising a two-storey house, a church, workshops and a cemetery, was created within the ruins (Fig. 7.2, Plate 7.1). Rather than being a modest reoccupation of an abandoned site, the finds associated with the new use of the buildings imply the complex had an administrative role and suggests the site was now the manor house, or aristocratic *oikos*, of a local official, possibly an *archon*. For the next century it was possibly the place from which Butrint was governed.

The house

The house was situated within the area of the former narthex of the basilica and was accessed by the triple doorway that had formed the main entrance of the earlier building (Fig. 7.3). Beyond, the doorway between the exonarthex and the narthex also remained accessible, although it was slightly narrowed by the insertion of a blocking wall (7427) along its eastern side, which reduced the width of the door to 1.10 m wide. To the west of this door two columns (7428 and 7429), presumably robbed from one of the surrounding buildings, had been rammed into the floor of the former exonarthex (Fig. 7.4). One column (7428) had a circular shaft terminating in a decorated capital while the other (7429) was octagonal in shape. Both terminated *c.* 1 m above the earlier floor and it is possible these columns may have been used as tying posts for animals.

The principal chamber of the new house was a first-floor hall, measuring 15.64 × 5.88 m internally, located

over the narthex. The floor of this chamber was partially supported on the piers originally used to support the earlier gallery that had covered this space. However, following the fire and abandonment of the basilica these piers may have become weakened and in order to add extra support, a series of large posts was set up against the piers (Fig. 7.5).⁴ The settings for these posts (3370, 3379, 3829, 3716, 3754 and 3765) were cut through the flagstone floor 3042 and were of various sizes, ranging from 0.35×0.30 m to



Figure 7.4. The narrowed doorway between the former exonarthex and narthex and the two columns (7428 and 7429) positioned to the west of it (1 m scale)

0.50×0.33 m and between 0.37–0.51 m in depth. In order to create these post-settings, small fires would have been set directly on the flagstones; these would then have been doused with water to crack the 0.12 m-thick stones (Fig. 7.6). Three further post-holes cut through the flagstone pavement were located along the northern side of the room (3706, 3710 and 3852). These would also have held posts to support the overlying floor.

The hall was entered from the west via the first-floor room located over the western chamber of the former basilica. Due to damage, the stairs leading to this upper room were strengthened by a large grey marble column (7430) located at the northern end of the stair block 3081 (Fig. 7.7).

Following the insertion of the column supports for the upper floor, the layout of the ground floor beneath the hall was reorganised. A series of roughly built walls was constructed between the piers of the earlier Phase 8 building. Two of these walls (3085 and 3056) completely blocked-in the gaps between the western piers while the northeastern gap was narrowed (wall 3145) (Fig. 7.8; see also Fig. 7.3).⁵ Built from a mix of tile and limestone rubble, bonded by green clay, these walls now divided the chamber into three rooms.

The layout of the ground floor of the western chamber was also altered at this time. A new wall (2118/3140) (3.80×0.55 m), built in a similar technique to walls 3085, 3056 and 3145, was inserted across the width of the northern room, dividing the chamber into three rooms (Fig. 7.9).

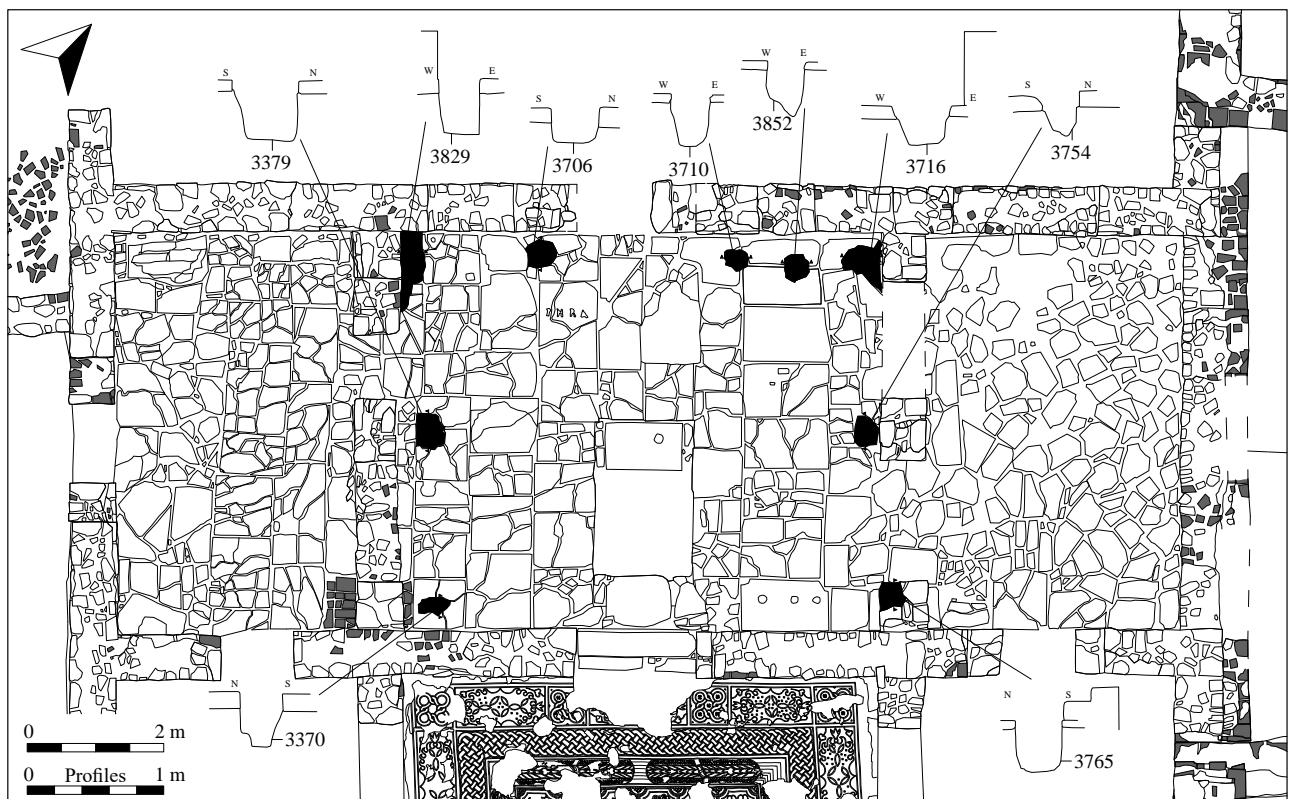


Figure 7.5. Plan and profiles of the supporting posts cut through the flagstone floor of the former narthex

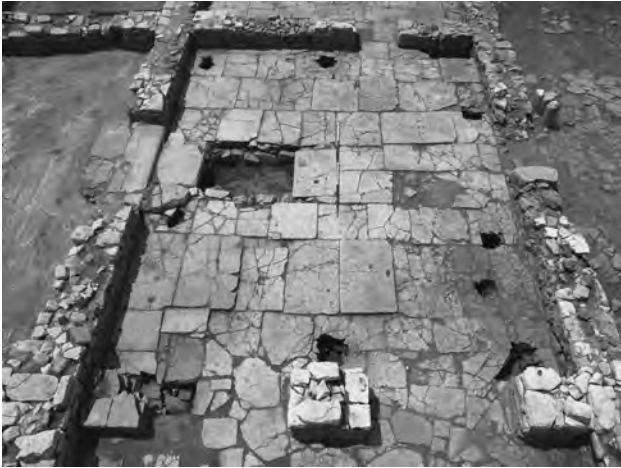


Figure 7.6. The fire-cracked post-holes cut through the flagstone floor of the former narthex (2 m scale)



Figure 7.7. Column 7430 used as a support to strengthen the stair block 3081 (20 cm scale)



Figure 7.8. Blocking walls 3085 and 3056 built between the Phase 8 piers

Unlike the rooms below the hall, where gaps were left to allow access between the rooms, no doorway appears to have been incorporated into wall 2118/3140. The northern room was accessed from the former exonarthex and may have had a domestic role, as a small tile-built kiln/hearth (7431) was located in the northeastern corner of the room (Fig. 7.10). Part of a marble column had been placed on its side under the kiln to support the floor of it. Surrounding the kiln and forming the new floor of the room was a layer

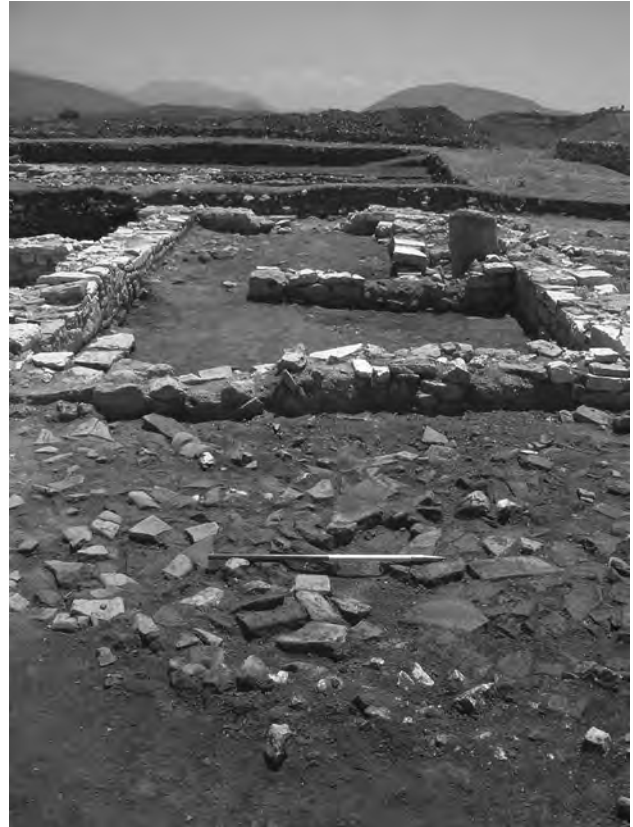


Figure 7.9. Division wall 2118/3140. Tile floor surface 1075/3059 can be seen in the foreground (1 m scale)



Figure 7.10. Hearth 7431 located in the northeastern corner of the northern room of the Phase 11 divided western chamber (1 m scale)

of broken roof tiles (1075/3059). The central room was connected to the western room of the divided narthex as the door between these two areas remained open during this period. For those entering the building from the northern entrance this doorway and the room beyond would have been the principal route by which to access the staircase



Figure 7.11. The Phase 11 doorway cut through the northern end of the Phase 7 wall 3092 (1 m scale)

located in the far southern room of the western chamber. Within this southern room, a new floor surface was laid comprising a mix of rough limestone slabs and broken floor tiles (3007/3036) set within a green silty clay (3010), the earlier floor 3080 having been removed. Layer 3010 also extended across the central room (see Fig. 7.3). The small room to the south of the chamber was also altered as the door leading to the former north portico was blocked-in (wall 3319).

As part of these alterations, the apse of the earlier Roman hall also seems to have been reused. A door 1 m wide was cut into the northern end of the Phase 7 wall 3092, the base of which was 0.37 m above that of the floor of the western chamber of the divided narthex (Fig.

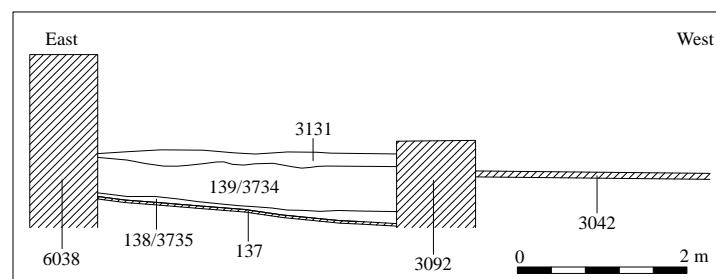


Figure 7.12. Section across the apse of the former apsidal hall showing the deposits below the Phase 11 mortar surface 3131. See Fig. 7.3 for location

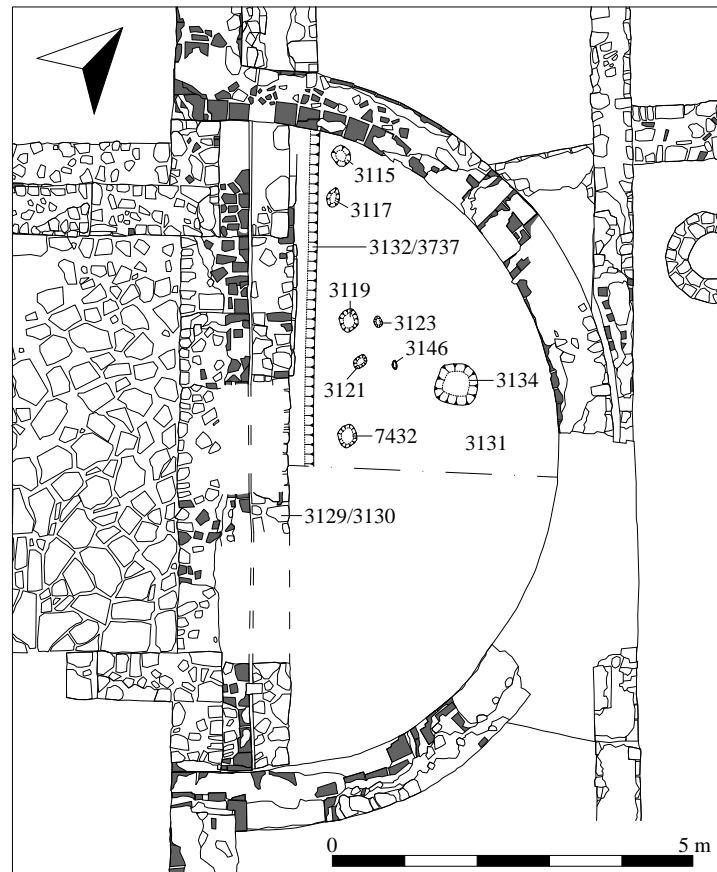


Figure 7.13. Plan of the new supporting wall 3129/3130 and features associated with the construction of the wall



Figure 7.14. Overhead view of floor 3131 with the construction cut 3132/3737 and a number of the post supports visible cut through it. The large cut in the corner of the apse was excavated by the Albanian Institute of Archaeology. The floor of the Phase 3a apsidal hall 137 can be seen at the base of it (photo Stuart Randall)

7.11). A thick layer of rubble (139/3734) was then dumped into the apse, where it sealed a layer of silt (138/3735) that had built up across the floor of the cistern during the period the site was abandoned (Fig. 7.12). A mortar layer (3131) (0.10 m thick) was then laid over the rubble to form the new floor of the room, the level of which was c. 0.20 m higher than the floor located in the other chambers beneath the hall.⁶

However, due to inherent structural problems, a substantial new supporting wall (3129/3130) soon had to be built across the apse in order to strengthen both it and the eastern end of the building (Fig. 7.13).⁷ Measuring 8.90×1.55 m wide, the wall was built in a construction cut (3132/3737) dug through floor 3131 (Fig. 7.14). To support the construction of the wall, scaffolding was erected along the eastern side of the wall as indicated by a series of post-holes (3115, 3117, 3119, 3121 and 7432) cut through the earlier floor. These were of various sizes ranging from 0.16–0.26 m in width and 0.09–0.23 m in depth. Additional small stake-holes (3123 and 3146) were erected to the east of posts 3119 and 3121, while a further single large post

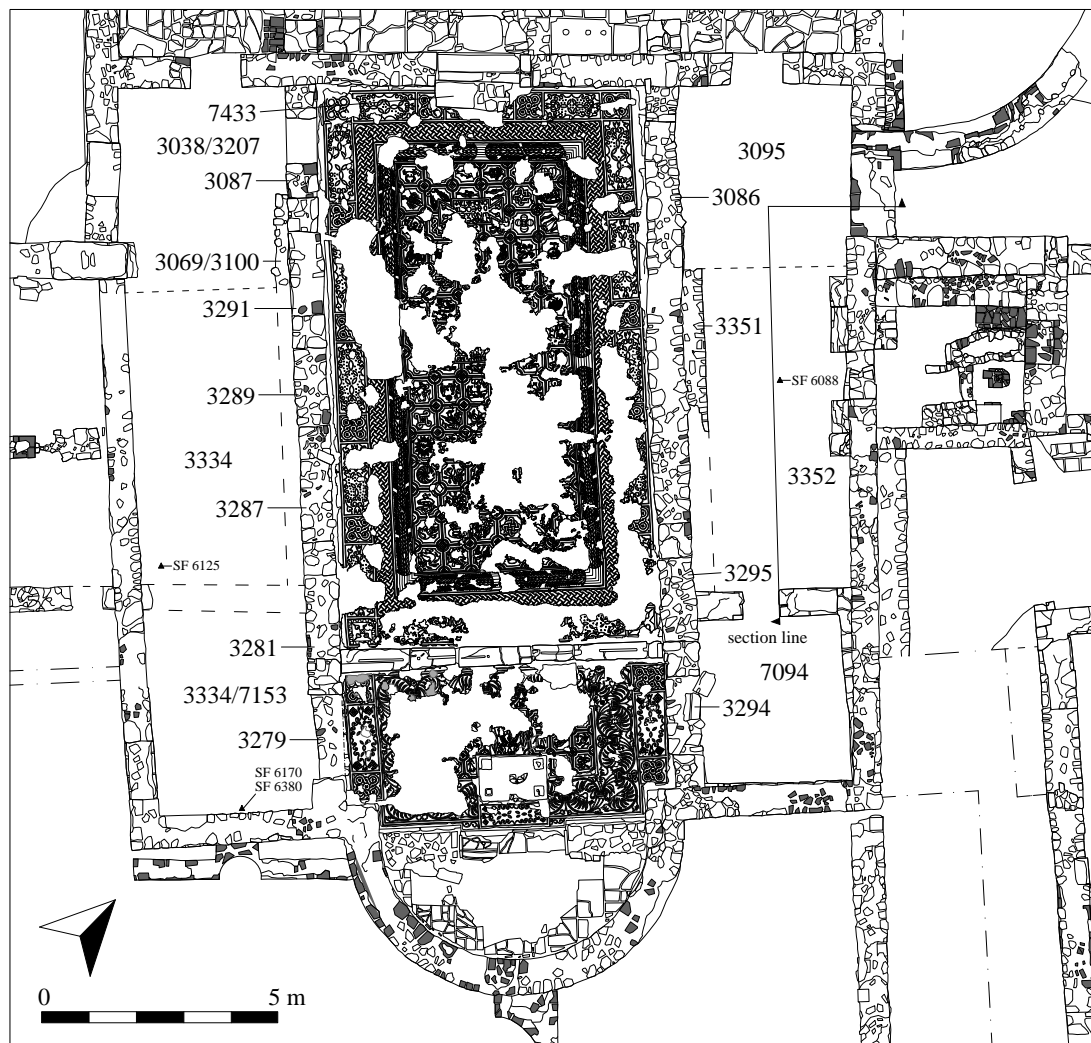


Figure 7.15. The Phase 11 basilica

(3134) (0.57×0.45 m wide and 0.31 m deep) was located just beyond these.⁸ Once built the wall's construction cut (3132/3737) was backfilled (3133/3738).

The basilica

The basilica remained the religious focus of the site. Following its abandonment in Phase 9, the interior of the building was cleaned out and the superstructure repaired (Fig. 7.15). As part of the repairs, the openings between the arcades separating the nave from the side aisles were blocked-in by a series of roughly built walls (3279, 3281, 3287, 3289, 3291, 3087 along the western side and 3294, 3295, 3086 along the eastern side), the construction of which (a mix of tile and limestone rubble bonded by green clay) matched the blocking walls built within the former narthex and western chamber (Fig. 7.16). As well as infilling the arcades, blocking 3086 was also built over piers

3293, 3292, and 3073, implying the damage to the northern end of the eastern arcade was more severe and required the whole wall to be replaced (Fig. 7.17). The collapse of these piers may have caused much of the damage that can be seen across the central part of the nave mosaic. Access between the former east aisle and the nave was now completely closed off. By contrast, access to the west aisle was initially maintained as the northernmost blocking (3087) did not extend across the whole space between piers 3077 and 3078 but was restricted to the southern side of it, leaving a gap 0.96 m to the north which now became the principal access between the two chambers. The limestone slabs covering the stylobate between the piers now became the threshold of the door, and this new use may explain why these stones survived *in situ* whilst elsewhere they had been removed prior to the blocking. In time, however, this door would be also be blocked in (wall 3101) (see Phase 13 below) (Fig. 7.18).

In the nave, due to the slumping of the mosaic pavement 3103 in front of the main entrance, a step (7433) (0.52 m wide) was inserted along the southern side of the original threshold (Fig. 7.19). Underlying the step and infilling the



Figure 7.16. Aerial view of the complex showing the blocked-in arcades of the Phase 7 basilica



Figure 7.17. Detail of the Phase 11 blocking wall 3086 built over the Phase 7 pier 3073 at the northern end of the eastern arcade (20 cm scale)



Figure 7.18. The doorway at the northern end of the western arcade subsequently blocked in by the Phase 13 wall 3101 (1 m scale)



Figure 7.19. Step 7433 inserted along the southern side of the Phase 7 threshold stone 3104 (1 m scale)

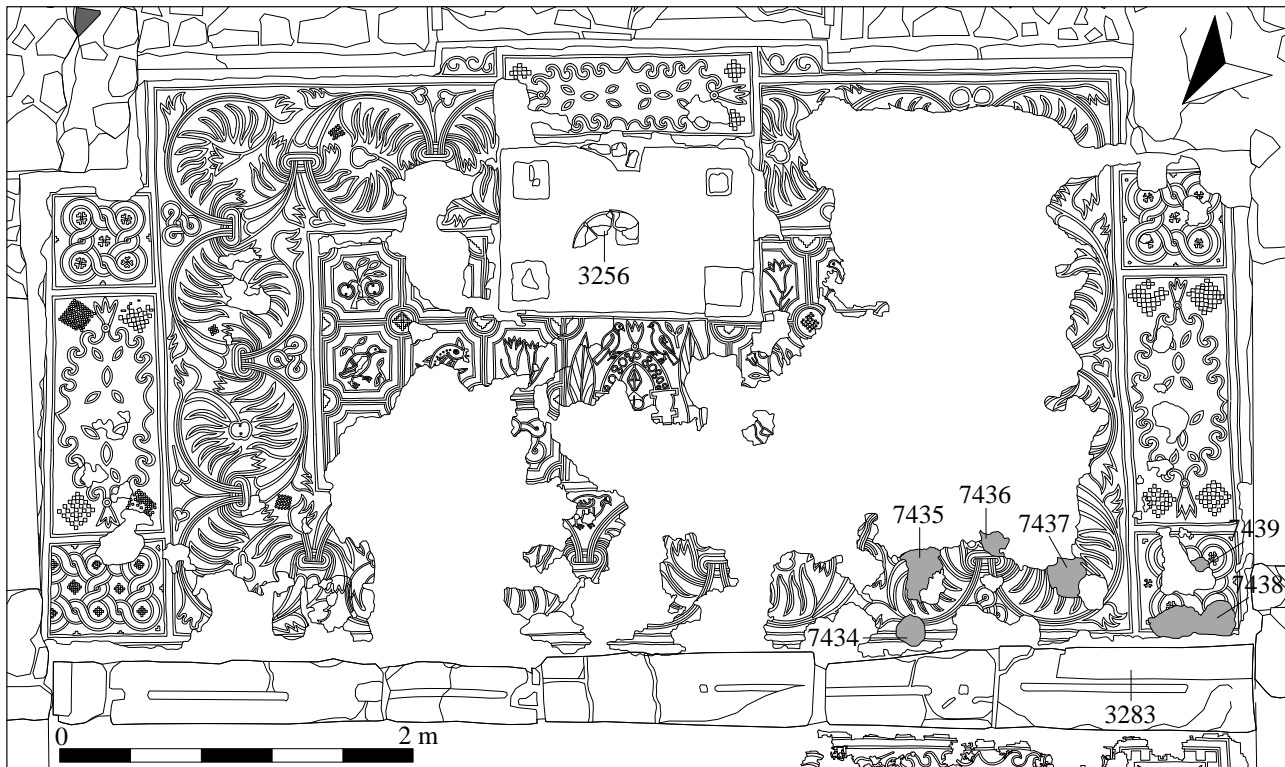


Figure 7.20. Plan showing the position of the Phase 11 temporary posts used to support the sanctuary roof

slight depression in the mosaic floor was a layer of broken tiles.

Within the sanctuary, an enduring structural weakness inside the sill of the chancel screen saw a second set of supporting posts added (7434, 7435, 7436, 7437, 7438 and 7439), once more driven through the mosaic (Fig. 7.20). Again these were only temporary and following the removal of the posts, the holes in the pavement were repaired. However, this time no attempt was made to recreate the original configurations of the mosaic, with white *tesserae* being used instead (see Chapter 11 and Plate 11.33). To strengthen this end of the building further, the original chancel screen was replaced. A more robust wall (3283), incorporating elements of the earlier screen along with a mix of large stone blocks scavenged from the surrounding ruinous buildings, was built over the southern edge of the chancel screen foundation (3282) to form a load-bearing wall to support the roof. Part of this wall could be seen still attached to the western end of 3282 (Fig. 7.21), while other pieces, including a roughly hewn limestone threshold block (3236) ($0.90 \times 0.70 \times 0.15$ m) and a large, well-cut rectangular limestone block (3237) ($1.20 \times 0.90 \times 0.20$ m) which had fallen away from the wall, were found in the destruction layers sealing the sanctuary (see below).

These repairs and alterations suggest the main focus of the church was now centred on the sanctuary and the southern apse, this space becoming a small chapel. As the original altar had been removed following the abandonment of the church, a new altar was dedicated within the chapel. The remains of a pinkish-white marble column (3256)

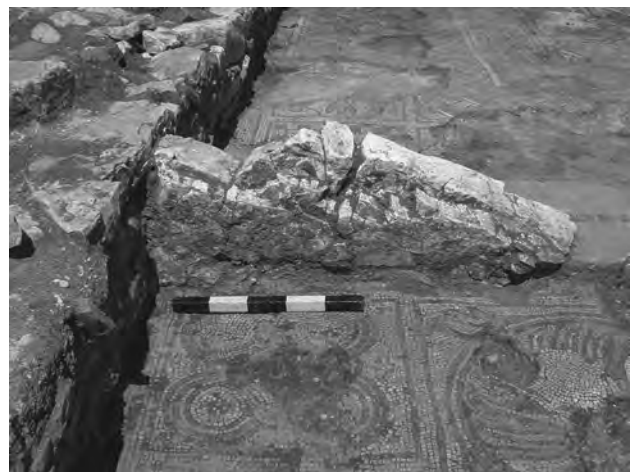


Figure 7.21. Part of the surviving Phase 11 screen wall 3283 (50 cm scale)

found sitting centrally over the foundation stone of the earlier altar formed the support of the new altar (Fig. 7.22).

The chapel was approached via the former nave, which remained an open area during this period. At some point soon after the house and chapel were completed a grave (3245) containing the body of a young male aged 16–24 years old (3880) was inserted along the western side of this space (Fig. 7.23).

Grave 3245 was a large rectangular cut 2.40×0.74 m by 0.70 m deep. Aligned with the side wall of the nave, the grave had been dug through the border of the mosaic

pavement (3103). When the grave was initially dug it appears it was meant to be slightly further to the north. However, soon after those digging it started removing the mosaic they encountered two walls (3067 and 3247) of the earlier Roman *domus* and so had to move its position slightly. Both sides of the grave were lined by small



Figure 7.22. The in situ remains of the pink-white marble column 3256 used as the new support of the Phase II altar

limestone and tile walls (3896) three courses high, while the southern end was lined by a single large limestone block with a thinner one placed over it. The northern end, which abutted the southern face of the Roman wall 3067, was made up of two large limestone blocks placed one on top of the other. Once these walls had been inserted a layer of broken tile (7440) was used to line the base of the grave (Fig. 7.24). The body (3880) was then placed over these tiles in a supine position with the head to the north (Fig. 7.25). During decomposition the head had rolled slightly and was found lying on its right side, facing west. Both arms had been laid on the chest, with the right arm over the lower chest and the left arm across the upper chest; the legs were extended. Measurements from the long bones, (right femur and tibia, left humerus) indicate the individual stood between 1.70–1.72 m (5' 7" to 5' 8") in height.⁹ When buried the individual appears to have been clothed, as a large rectangular buckle of copper alloy (SF 6183) was found over the pelvic region of the skeleton, while an associated copper suspension ring (SF 6189) was located over the left hip (Figs 7.26 and 7.27; see also Volume 6.2, Figs 6.14 and 6.17 and Plate 6.3).¹⁰ Due to the damp conditions within the grave, fragments of leather were found preserved around the tongue and back of the buckle as well as around the centre and over one edge of

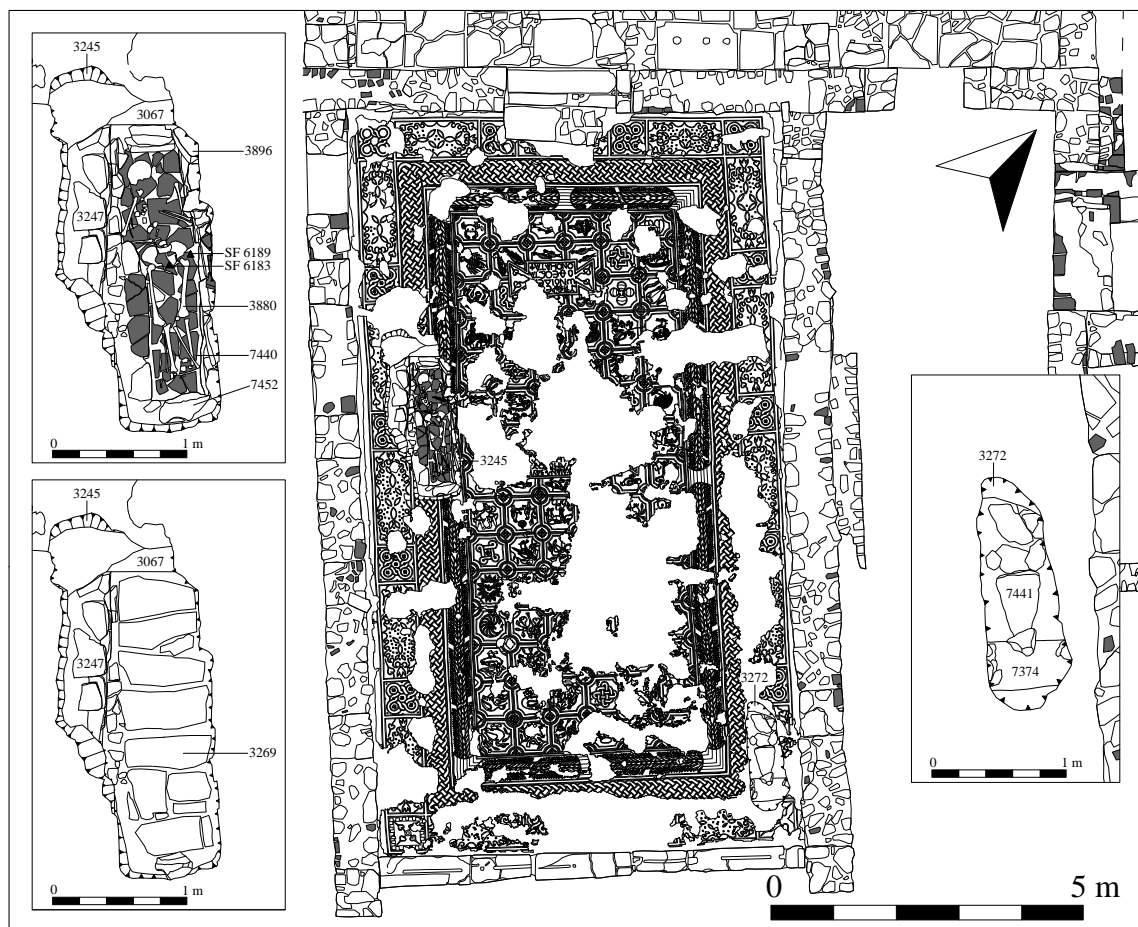


Figure 7.23. The mid-9th to mid-10th-century graves 3245 and 3272 cut through the nave of the Phase 7 basilica



Figure 7.24. Grave 3245, looking north, showing the lining and the tile base. The walls of the earlier domus can be seen along the western and northern sides of the grave (1 m scale)

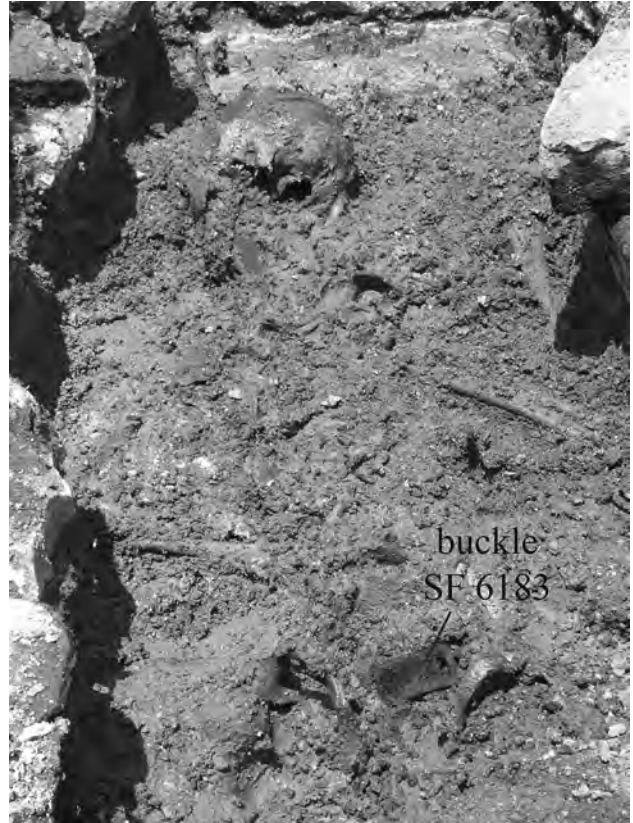


Figure 7.26. The copper alloy buckle (SF 6183) over the pelvic region of skeleton 3880, during excavation



Figure 7.25. Overhead view of grave 3245 and skeleton 3880



Figure 7.27. The copper alloy buckle (SF 6183) following conservation

the ring – presumably from the belt these pieces secured. Five threads from the clothing secured by the belt were also preserved on the back of the buckle.¹¹ Following the interment, the grave was sealed by eight large limestone slabs (3269), the edges of which were supported on the lining (Fig. 7.28).¹² These in turn were covered by a dark greyish-brown silty clay backfill (3246) (0.20 m thick) which brought the level of the grave up to the mosaic pavement. This layer also trickled through the gaps in the

capping and, as deposit 3879, covered the skeleton beneath. When this deposit was being put into the grave, a limestone slab (7452) was placed vertically at the southern end of the grave to form a footstone to the burial.

A rectangular cut (3272) (1.80 × 0.48–0.60 m) located in the southeast corner of the nave may demarcate the position of a further contemporary burial. Again, the cut had been dug through the border of the earlier mosaic and was aligned with the side wall of the nave (Fig. 7.29).

Infilling the cut was a dark olive-green clay silt (3273) (0.34 m thick). Beneath this backfill, three limestone slabs (7441) were revealed, along with part of the foundation wall of the northern stylobate (7374) that had surrounded the courtyard of the Roman *domus*. Running across the base of the cut, these slabs, the southernmost of which partially rested on the earlier wall, are thought to have formed the capping to the burial, with the wall forming its southern limit. Measuring 0.96 m in length, the grave was probably that of a young child.¹³

Assuming cut 3272 was a burial, their location and the care with which both of these individuals were treated in death clearly shows they were well respected and may suggest that they belonged to the official's family (Fig. 7.30).

The aisles

In the western aisle one of the first internal changes to be made, following the insertion of the blocking walls, was the construction of a bench (3069/3100) (0.40 m

wide) along the eastern side of the room (Fig. 7.31). Built against pier 3078, the bench extended 8.25 m to the south and ran along the side of the arcade blocking wall before terminating against the inner face of the stylobate wall of the north portico of the 3rd-century *domus*, this earlier wall continuing to remain visible running across the width of the room. After the bench was completed a mid-greyish-brown silty layer (0.06–0.13 m thick), with a



Figure 7.28. Overhead view of the capping stones 3269 (1 m scale)



Figure 7.29. Grave 3272 and the capping stones 7441, looking south (1 m scale)



Figure 7.30. View looking south of the basilica showing the position of the mid-9th to mid-10th-century graves

large amount of broken tile mixed through it, was spread along the length of the room to form a new rough surface (3038/3207/3334/7153), the original floor of the aisle having been removed after the basilica was abandoned.

Apart from a few fragments of 10th–11th-century pottery, suggesting some kind of domestic activity within



Figure 7.31. The western aisle, looking south, showing the Phase 11 features (2 m scale)

the room, there were no other obvious indications of how the space was utilised at this time; it may have just been used for storage purposes. Despite this, an important find was made at the southern end of the room where two exceptionally well-preserved chain assemblages, comprising a complex suspension unit (SF 6170) and a chain loop made of four different-sized links (SF 6380), were found lying on top of the tile surface (Figs 7.32 and 7.33). These chains were tightly bundled together and are thought to have been part of a steelyard balance mechanism. A small, square-shaped copper alloy object (SF 6125) was also found on top of the floor and may have been a weight from the balance.

In the eastern aisle the sequence was similar (Fig. 7.34). Again a bench (3351) was built against the side of the arcade blocking wall. The southern end of the bench had been removed at some point, but as in the western aisle, this end of the bench had probably terminated against the inner edge of the northern portico stylobate which was still visible. Following this, a layer of mid-greenish-grey sandy gritty clay, containing abundant fragments of broken tile (3095/3352/7094), was spread along the length of the room to form a new surface. This surface had been laid over a thin layer of greenish-grey silty clay (7007/7098) that had built up over the aisle in the two centuries during which the building was abandoned (Fig. 7.35).¹⁴ Once again very little pottery was recovered from the tile surface, but together with residual 3rd- to 6th-century material were several fragments of early medieval pottery.

A lead seal (SF 6088) was found lying on top of this surface (Fig. 7.36). Dated to the 10th century, the seal was issued by Constantine, a eunuch courtier from Constantinople in charge of the imperial banquets. On the obverse of the seal was depicted a peacock holding a stem in its beak (see Volume 6.2, Chapter 4).

Connected with these changes to the aisle, the small room to the east of it was also altered at this time as a large



Figure 7.32. Excavating the steelyard chains



Figure 7.36. The obverse of the 10th-century seal (SF 6088) issued by Constantine, a eunuch courtier from Constantinople in charge of the imperial banquets

of wall 3776/7394. The flue, defined by walls 3730 and 3726 and measuring 0.68 m wide, was positioned to the west, while the main chamber of the kiln was to the east, the two separated by a low division wall (3774). Internally the main chamber measured 1.05×1 m. Within this space were three tile-built stacks which would have been used to support the floor of the kiln. Two of these stacks (3772 and 3773) were located along the southern side of the chamber abutting wall 3776 while the third (3373) was centrally placed, just in front of the flue. The largest stack was 3373, measuring 0.50×0.43 m in size. Stack 3773 measured 0.30×0.32 m while 3772 measured 0.26×0.27 m. The eastern stack (3772) had partially collapsed but the other two survived to eleven courses (c. 0.57 m) in height. All the internal walls of the chamber, as well as the stacks, were covered by a clay lining (3733) (30 mm thick) burnt a dark reddish-orange due to the intense heat. The floor of both the kiln (3771) and the flue (3809) had also been severely scorched.

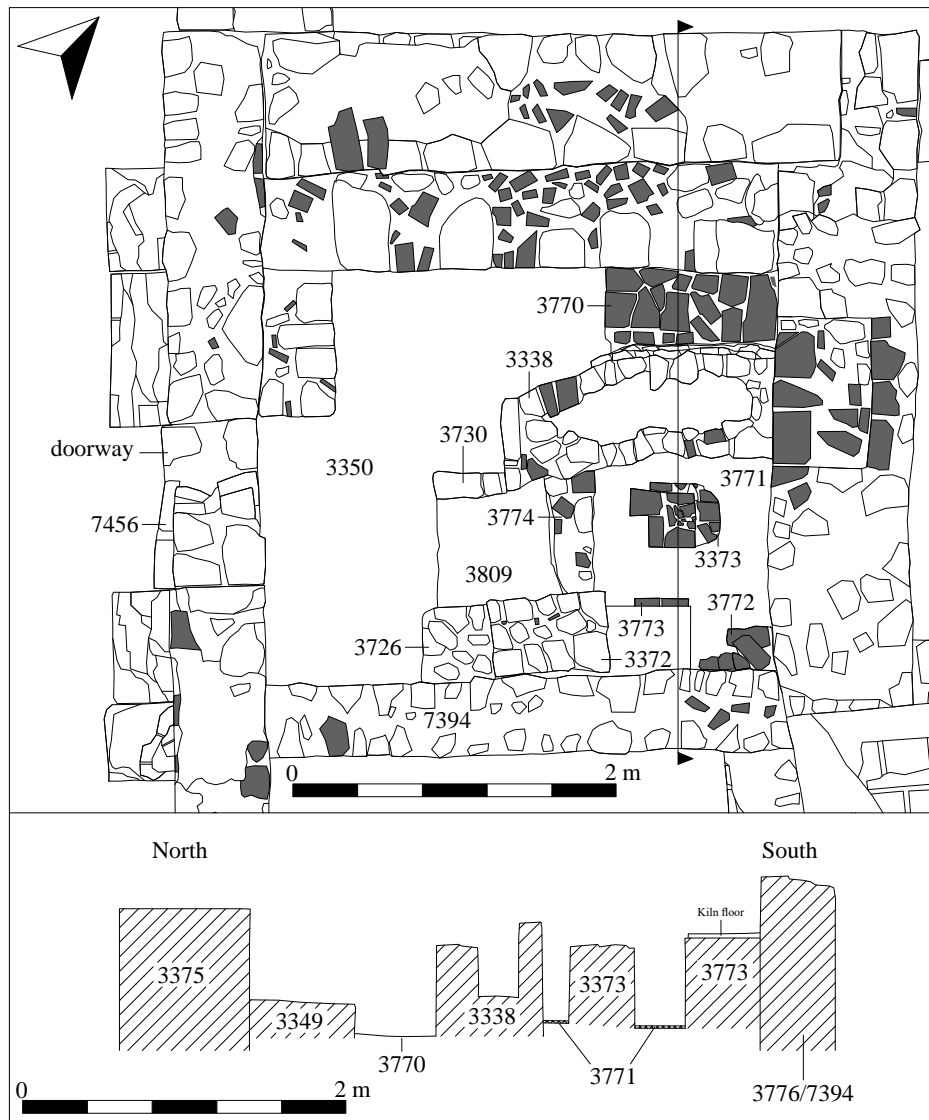


Figure 7.37. Plan and profile of kiln 3338/3372



Figure 7.38. Kiln 3338/3372, looking east (1 m scale)



Figure 7.39. The marble inscription SF 6291 in kiln wall 3338

The northern edge of the kiln had been built over the tile surface 3770 (cf. Fig. 6.105). This earlier Phase 8 floor did not cover the whole room at this time, as to the south the tiles had been lifted. As a result the make-up layer 3350 below the tiles was now utilised as the surface of the room. Due to this floor (3350) being 0.17 m below that of the tile surface in the east aisle, a step (7456) was inserted into the room's western doorway. As part of this construction the door was also narrowed (to 0.60 m) along its southern side, presumably to restrict the air flow to the flue of the kiln.

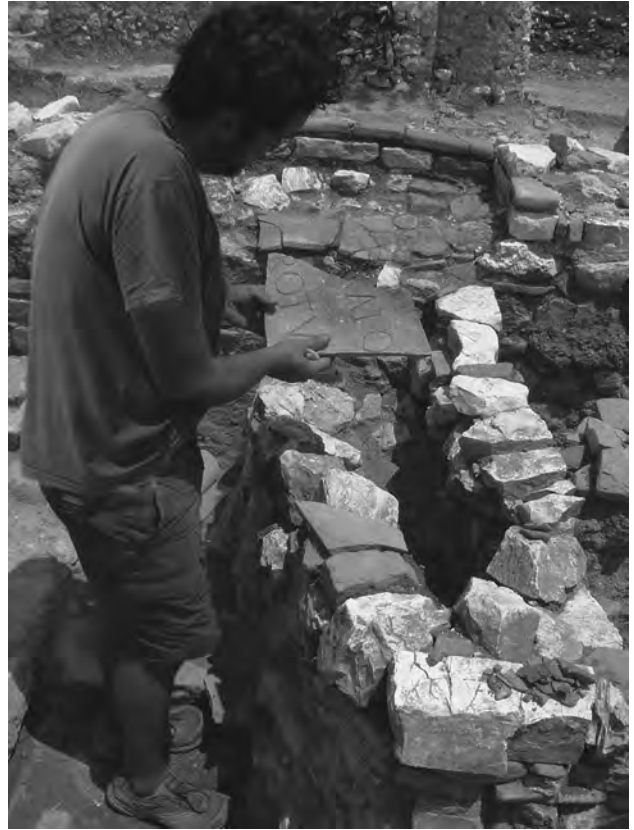


Figure 7.40. The marble inscription SF 6291 after being removed from wall 3338

At some point a rectangular pit (3801) (0.78×0.57 m), possibly to hold the wood used to fire the kiln, was dug in the southwest corner of the room (Fig. 7.41). Positioned against the western end of wall 3726, the pit was 0.30 m deep and had been dug through layer 3350. Stones had been placed around the top of the cut to form an edging. Due to the pit extending slightly across the southern end of the flue, a short wall (3794) (c. 0.46 m long) was built inside the flue to prevent the pit obstructing the opening. Built against the northern face of wall 3726, wall 3794 narrowed the flue opening to c. 0.35 m wide. Covering the base of the narrowed flue was a thin charcoal spread (3729). This deposit contained a few fragments of medieval pottery within it and represents either residue from the final firing of the flue or the rake-out from it.¹⁶

Almost half the total percentage of medieval pottery recovered from the site was made up of coarse wares. Most of these are thought to have been locally made kitchen wares and it seems likely that those dated to between the 9th and 10th century (roughly 18% of the total assemblage) were probably produced in this kiln.¹⁷

Cemetery

To the south of the house a small cemetery, possibly for the community or retainers under the official's jurisdiction, sprung up in the area of the courtyard of the earlier *domus*

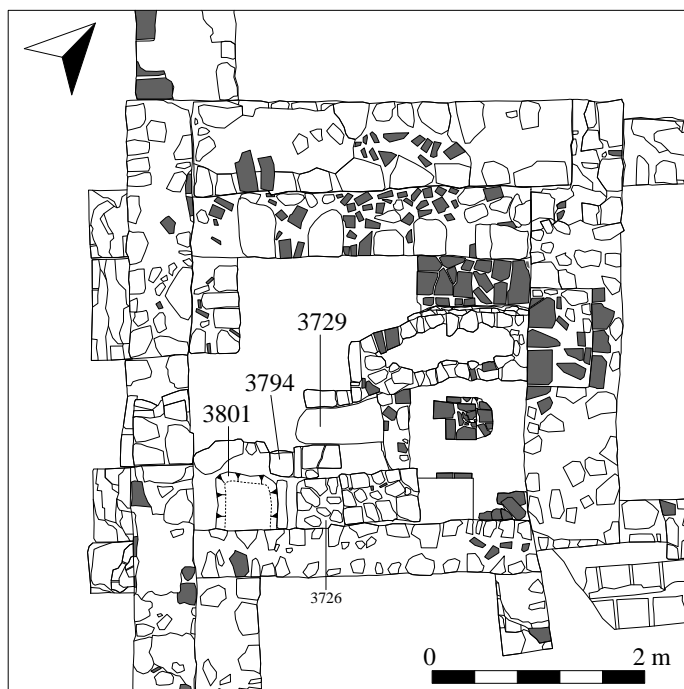


Figure 7.41. Plan of the later alterations made to kiln 3338/3372 and the charcoal spread 3729 within the narrowed flue of the kiln

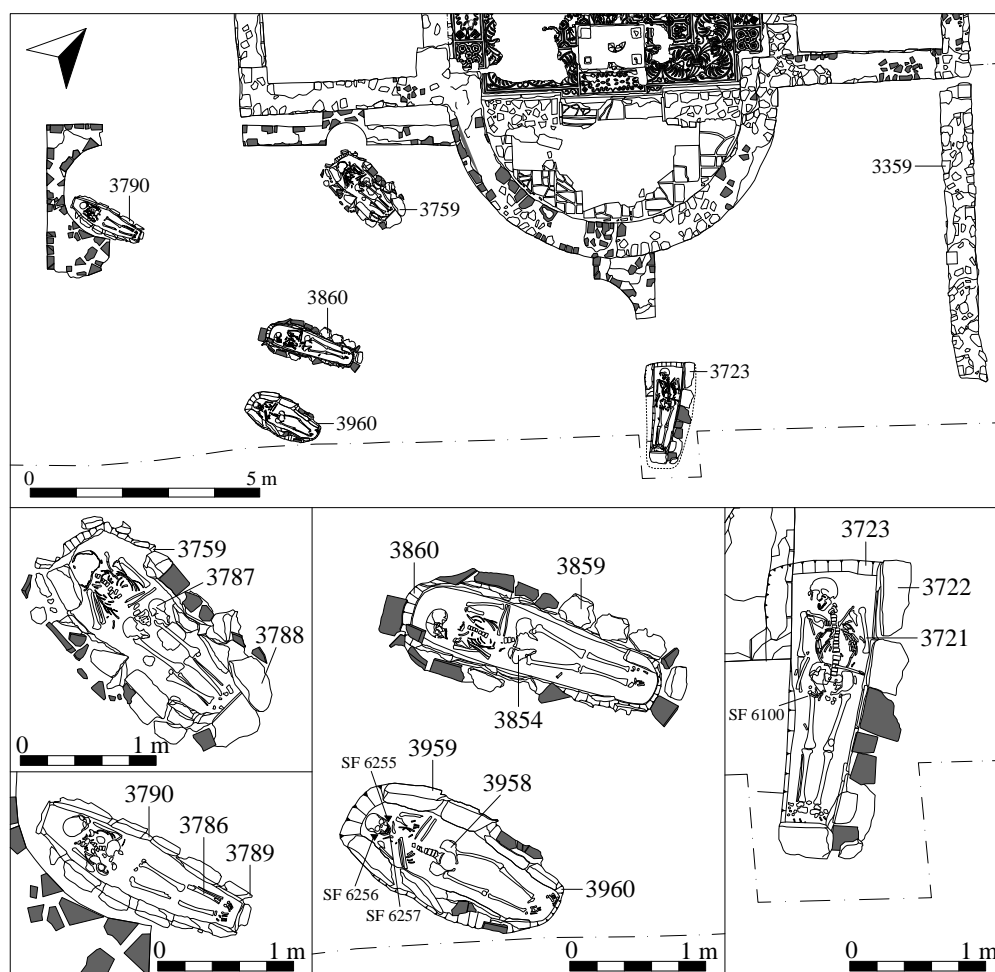


Figure 7.42. Mid-9th to mid-10th-century graves to the south of the house



Figure 7.43. Grave 3790

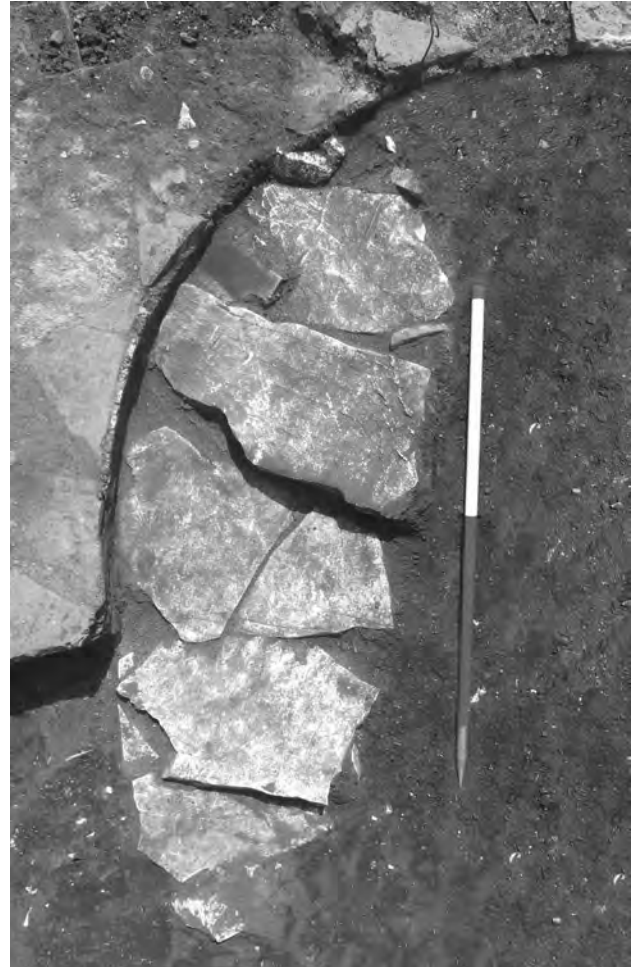


Figure 7.44. Grave capping 3780 (1 m scale)

(Fig. 7.42). The graves had been dug through the dark greyish-brown silt layer (3219/3340/3345/3791/3855) that had built up over the area in the intervening period. A wall (3359) made up of blocks of masonry scavenged from the collapsed southern range of buildings was built against the southeast corner of the basilica to form a boundary wall around this side of the cemetery.

Three of the burials (3790, 3860 and 3759) were located in the inner pool while a fourth (3960) was situated in the outer pool, just to the side of the southern niche. All the burials were stone lined and were orientated true east–west, with the heads placed at the west end of the grave.

Grave 3790 was a sub-rectangular cut 1.70×0.62 m located against the southern edge of the northwestern apse of the inner pool; it contained the body of a young adolescent male, aged 13–15 years old (Fig. 7.43).¹⁸ The body (3786) had been placed in a supine position on the floor of the pool, which formed the base of the grave, with the arms placed over the chest and the legs extended. The sides of the cut were lined by 13 limestone slabs (3789) (varying in size from $0.44 \times 0.30 \times 0.06$ m to $0.23 \times 0.17 \times 0.05$ m) set on edge. Five large, irregular-shaped limestone slabs (3780), ranging in size from $0.58 \times 0.32 \times 0.05$ m to $0.34 \times 0.30 \times 0.06$ m, capped the grave (Fig. 7.44). During decomposition the skull had rolled and was found against the northern side of the grave. The chest and pelvis area

had also become disturbed after death, probably as a result of having been in an open grave covered by slabs. In time soil had infilled the space, filtering through the gaps in the capping. A number of sherds of 5th/6th-century pottery were recovered from this deposit (3781), along with a piece of possible medieval amphora.

To the east, just in front of the northern central niche of the inner fountain, was grave 3759, a sub-oval cut measuring 1.93×0.94 m containing the body of a large adult male, aged 20–24 years old (Fig. 7.45). The grave had been lined with a mix of limestone blocks (3788) varying in size from $0.30 \times 0.23 \times 0.12$ m to $0.20 \times 0.12 \times 0.04$ m, with the smaller blocks laid flat and stacked three courses high, and the larger ones placed on their edge, sometimes with tiles over them. The body (3787) had been laid on top of the floor of the pool, in a supine position, with the head on its right side. An extra limestone slab that had been placed against the lining prevented the head from moving. The right arm was flexed against the side of the body with the hand resting under the chin while the left arm had been placed over the chest. Both legs were disjointed at the knee; the left femur was displaced and found upside down suggesting the legs were slightly raised when the body was interred.¹⁹ The feet were



Figure 7.45. Grave 3759 (1 m scale)

together with the right slightly under the left and partially extending below a flat limestone slab that formed the base of the lining at this end of the grave. Infilling the burial was a dark greyish-brown silty clay (3758) that contained some early medieval potsherds. Mixed in with the layer was a large amount of rubble, much of which seems to have collapsed from the grave's lining. This was especially noticeable along the southern edge of the grave and partly explains how the damage to this side of the skeleton occurred. A number of copper alloy objects were also found within this layer including part of a ring (SF 6105), a punch or nail (SF 6107), and a decorative object (SF 6108). A very corroded 5th/6th-century coin (SF 6124/Cat. 450) was also recovered, along with three iron nails that were positioned to either side of the left and right tibia and by the right side of the pelvis. These finds may have been deliberately interred with the burial but the later disturbance makes their true association difficult to prove. There was no sign that the burial had been capped, although capping slabs may have been removed thereby explaining the collapse of the lining. An AMS radiocarbon date of AD 890–1030 (1060 ± 40 BP)²⁰ was obtained for this burial.



Figure 7.46. Grave 3860 (1 m scale)

Grave 3860 was a sub-rectangular cut 2.10×0.75 m located just in front of the pool's southern niche (Fig. 7.46). The grave was lined using a mix of angular and sub-angular limestone blocks, varying in size from $0.14 \times 0.12 \times 0.04$ m to $0.32 \times 0.16 \times 0.05$ m, and tile fragments (3859). These were placed lengthways and at least two courses survived laid on top of the floor of the inner fountain. Within the grave was the body of a young adolescent female, aged 17–24 years old. The body (3854) had been placed in a supine position, with the right arm flexed against the side of the chest and the left arm placed over the lower chest. The legs were fully extended. A limestone block had been placed against the left foot. Unlike the other burials, this body had not been laid directly on to the floor of the pool but instead had been placed in a second, smaller cut (0.10 m deep) that had been dug through the pool's floor. This probably occurred because the deposits overlying this side of the pool were not so thick and thus it was necessary to make the grave deeper to compensate for this.²¹ The grave had been capped originally, although in time these appear to have been removed, with only one large slab (3821) remaining towards the eastern end of the grave (Fig. 7.47). Infilling the grave was a mid-brownish-black silty clay (3824) that contained some early medieval pottery.



Figure 7.47. Grave capping 3821 (1 m scale)



Figure 7.48. Grave 3960

An iron object (SF 6144) and a strip of copper alloy (SF 6147) were also recovered.

Just to the south of 3860 was grave 3960 (Fig. 7.48). The western end of this sub-rectangular cut (1.70×0.80 m) had been dug against the outer edge of the southern wall of the pool, which suggests this wall was still partially visible at this time. Lining the sides of the grave were eight limestone slabs (3959), the largest of which measured $0.45 \times 0.31 \times 0.08$ m; there were no stones at the ends of the grave. The west end of the grave used the floor of the fountain as its base while the eastern end was located overlying the dismantled wall line of the outer pool. Interred within the grave was the body of an adolescent female, aged 17–22 years old. The body (3958) had been buried in a supine position with the arms placed across the chest and the legs extended. Two looped copper earrings were found either side of the head (SF 6255 left side and SF 6256 right side), while two further silver earrings were found under the jaw (SF 6257) (Fig. 7.49). These silver earrings appear originally to have been tied around the individual's neck as threads from the cord were found on one of them. The grave was capped by five large, irregular limestone slabs (3947), the largest measuring $0.70 \times 0.45 \times 0.05$ m (Fig. 7.50). In time soil had infilled the space of the grave, filtering through the gaps in the capping.



Figure 7.49. Bronze and silver earrings (SFs 6255, 6256 and 6257) from grave 3960

Within this fill (3948) a coin of the Epirus Republic dated 238–168 BC was recovered (SF 6245/Cat. 3), along with fragments of medieval pottery. AMS radiocarbon dating produced a calibrated date of AD 870–1010 (1110 ± 40 BP)²² for this burial.

A further burial (3723), which is thought to be associated with the cemetery, was found in the outer pool to the east (Fig. 7.51). Positioned just to the south of the apse, it was dug through layer 3330 and was a sub-rectangular cut measuring $2.22 \times 0.85 \times 0.45$ m, orientated north–south. The eastern and southern edges of the cut had been lined with large fragments of mortared masonry (3722). Varying in size from $0.55 \times 0.28 \times 0.22$ m to $0.30 \times 0.27 \times 0.22$ m, these blocks had been removed from a wall that had presumably collapsed close by, since all the inner faces bore similar incised lines on them. Fragments of tile and limestone had then been placed over these blocks to level the lining. Along the western side of the cut the grave partially truncated the southern end of the eastern wall of the inner pool (3719) and this was now utilised as the grave's lining.²³ The grave contained the body of a male (3721), aged 40–50 years old, who had been buried

in a supine position with his head to the north (during decomposition the head had rolled so that it was found lying on its right side). Both arms had been placed along the side of the body with the hands resting on the hips, while the legs were extended with the feet together. A coin of Leo VI (AD 886–912) (SF 6100/Cat. 24) was found by the right leg and is thought to have been deliberately interred with the individual (Fig. 7.52). Infilling the grave was a mid-brownish-grey silty clay (3720) which contained occasional small limestone and tile fragments. Within this deposit were ten large iron nails (SFs 6111–6120) found on either side of the body (see Volume 6.2, Fig. 6.51). A number of these were found overlying the edges of the cut. These are not coffin nails and seem to have come from some other nailed wooden board, possibly a disused door that had presumably been placed over the grave to cover it. The board does not seem to have extended over the whole of the grave as a limestone slab partially covered the feet of the skeleton. A fragment of medieval amphora was recovered from this deposit, along with some late Roman pottery. An AMS radiocarbon date of AD 770–980 (1170 ± 40 BP)²⁴ was obtained for this burial.



Figure 7.50. Grave capping 3947 (1 m scale)



Figure 7.51. Grave 3723 (1 m scale)



Figure 7.52. Follis of Leo VI (AD 886–912) (SF 6100) from grave 3723

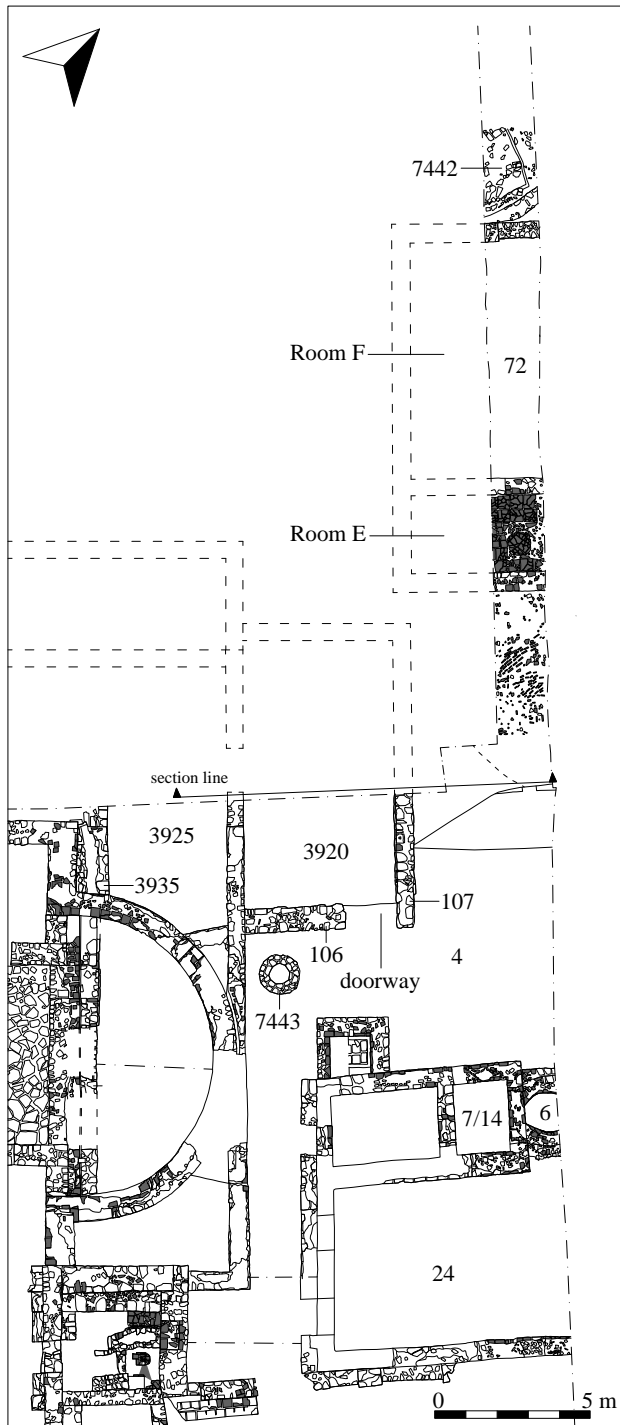


Figure 7.53. The eastern area showing Phase II features

Ancillary buildings

Along with the creation of the house and chapel, the surrounding area was also transformed as many of the walls of the earlier buildings associated with the Phase 3 and 5 *domus* and subsequent Phase 7–8 basilica appear to have remained standing (Fig. 7.53). Although in varying states of repair, there are indications that some of the rooms were reoccupied. There are also some signs of new buildings being constructed.

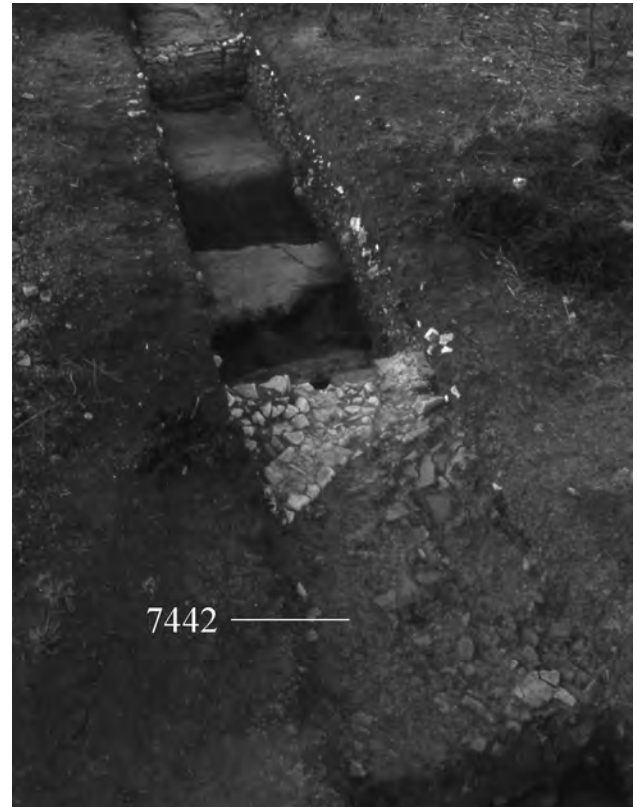


Figure 7.54. Kiln 7442 outside Room F of the reused Phase 3b eastern bath-house

The reuse of the eastern bath-houses and a new build

To the northeast, the two central rooms of the former *domus* bath-house (Rooms E and F), which had been maintained throughout the 6th century, were reused once more, Room F possibly becoming a small workshop associated with a large external kiln (7442) located just to the north of the building (Fig. 7.54).²⁵ Medieval pottery found pressed into the tile surface (72) inside Room F may relate to this activity. The small 6th-century bath-house built within the Roman cistern may also have been reused at this time. The walls of the building continued to remain standing to roof height and although the marble veneers had been stripped and both the hot plunge pool and the hot room behind it backfilled (contexts 6 and 7/14 respectively), fragments of medieval amphorae retrieved from contexts 4 and 24 along with a bronze coin of Leo VI (AD 886–912) (SF 2357/Cat. 10) from context 7 suggest some small-scale activity may have taken place within the building.

The reuse of this northeast corner of the site was not limited, however, to simply appropriating existing buildings, since a new building, defined by walls 106 and 107, was built against the eastern face of wall 144 (Fig. 7.55). These walls, which formed the southeast corner of the building, were cut through the earlier layer 3921/3922 and were built with roughly shaped limestone blocks and tiles bonded by a green clay, the consistency of which matched that used in the blocking walls situated beneath the first-floor hall of the main house. A worked piece of



Figure 7.55. The new Phase II building defined by walls 106 and 107 to the northeast of the house. Wall 3935 can be seen in the background (1 m scale)

Pentelic marble, possibly from the Temple mausoleum, was found in the construction of wall 107 and indicates that much of the stone used in the new building was sourced from the surrounding buildings (see Chapter 8). A gap 1.63 m wide between the walls appears to have been the original doorway into the building. Once built, a dark blackish-brown silty clay (3920) was spread between the walls to form the new floor surface of the room (Fig. 7.56). Fragments of medieval pottery, along with some residual late Roman pottery, were found pressed into this floor. Thought to be associated with the building was a stone-lined well (7443), located just to the south of wall 106. The well could be accessed from the new building following the removal of the northern end of wall 103.

Connected with the construction of this building, the area to the west of it was altered. The earlier walls 3990/7030/7031 and 7029 were demolished and replaced by a new north-south-aligned stone structure (3935), the western edge of which was built against the northern arm of the apsidal building and partially over the remains of wall 3990. Following this a series of rubble and clay deposits (3962, 3970 and 3956) was used to raise the level of the area before a final layer of green silty clay (3925) was spread to form the new surface of this western area.²⁶ Assuming the door through wall 144 remained open at this time, this area could be accessed from the new building. Why these alterations occurred is unclear due to the limited area uncovered but the aim may have been to create a formalised access route to the hall's principal northern entrance.

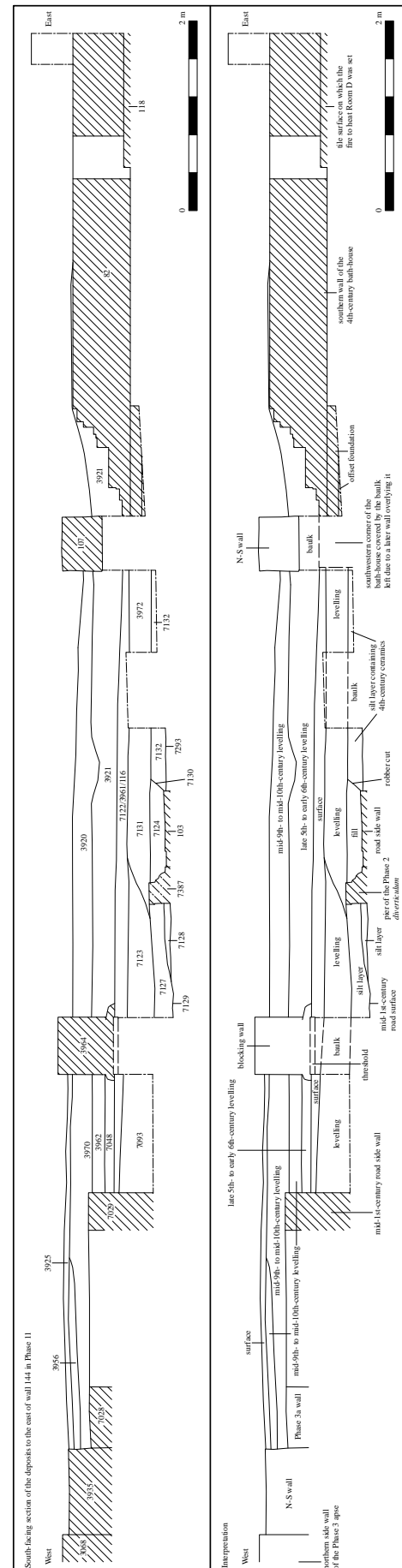


Figure 7.56. Section across the area to the northeast of the house showing the Phase II features. See Fig. 7.53 for location



Figure 7.57. View looking east across the building defined by walls 106 and 107 with wall 42 in the foreground (2 m scale)

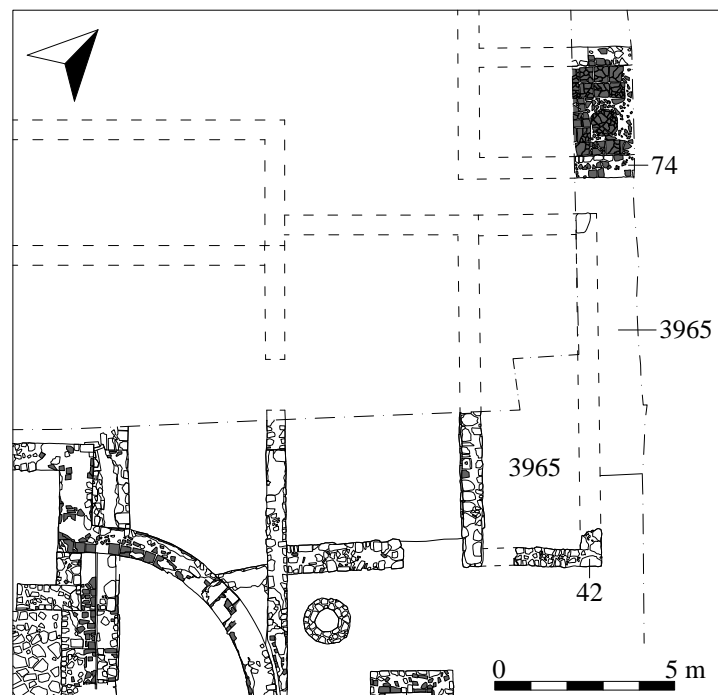


Figure 7.58. Plan of the extent of wall 42

In time a further structure, indicated by an L-shaped wall (42), was built to the east of the building (Fig. 7.57). Wall 42 was roughly constructed out of a mix of tile and limestone bonded with clay and was built over a layer of dark reddish-brown clay (3965); this had been deliberately spread along the eastern side of the earlier building to provide a firm foundation for the new structure. Much of the wall had been robbed leaving only the southeast corner

surviving. However, c. 8.70 m to the north, a similar-size limestone block to those used in wall 42 could be seen jutting out of the western face of the excavation trench (Fig. 7.58). As the block again appeared to have been cut through layer 3965, which was found to extend as far as the southern face of wall 74, this block may indicate the northern limit of the new building. It may also indicate the limit of the earlier building defined by wall 106/107 as the

western end of the wall would presumably have abutted the northeast corner of the earlier structure.

The east entrance and east portico

The former eastern entrance of the *domus* remained accessible during this period (Fig. 7.59). Due to slumping of the underlying deposits in and around the door, a layer of green clay containing some rubble (3828) was spread over the area in order to consolidate it (Fig. 7.60). This deposit partially sealed the western ends of the Phase 3 benches that had been positioned on either side of the door (3983 and 3984) as well as the remains of the southern side wall of the door (7042) and the vestiges of wall 7043. It also extended across the northern end of the former east portico. Along with a number of 5th/6th-century coins, a class 5 *folles* (c. AD 945–50) of Constantine VII (AD 913–59) (SF 6230/Cat. 39), minted in Constantinople, was recovered from the surface of this layer. A noticeable amount of window glass was found mixed throughout this deposit along with the base of a glass lamp (SF 6153) that might have been used within the basilica. A decorated tile from the surround of the earlier door was also found mixed within the deposit.²⁷ At the eastern end of the road a similar deposit of green clay was found (3047), which is thought to be a continuation of 3828, indicating this layer was spread along the length of the road.

Opposite the doorway a roughly built wall (3980) of limestone, tile and pink mortar chunks, bonded with green clay, was constructed against the eastern basilica wall 3299 (Fig. 7.61). Cut through layer 3828, much of the building material used in the wall appears to have been sourced from this layer. Only a small extent of the wall was revealed so it is unclear why it was constructed, but its positioning against wall 3299 may suggest it was built as a support to strengthen the earlier wall which by this time had been standing for almost four centuries.

The east wing

During this period the remains of the east wing were partially used for industrial activity (Fig. 7.62). Small workshops with associated kilns were set up in some of the rooms which, although now in a dilapidated state, are thought to have still been standing almost to roof height. Accessed from the west via the original doorways of the two southern rooms (Rooms 3 and 4), these may have now become two separate dwellings.

In Room 3 a kiln (3474) was constructed in the southeast corner of the room (Fig. 7.63). Cut through a light yellowish-brown clay (3476) (0.20 m thick) that had been spread across the room to form a new surface, the kiln seems to have been a large, open-ended rectangular structure (1.37 m wide) with a semicircular stoke pit (3436) situated at its northern end (Fig. 7.64). Post-holes (3509, 3584) on either side of the stoke pit indicate that posts demarcated the end of the structure, while a wall along the western side of the kiln (3475) partially screened off the structure from the rest of the room. Associated with the kiln appears to have been a post-built structure constructed roughly in the centre of the room. Defined by seven post-holes (3505, 3507, 3582,

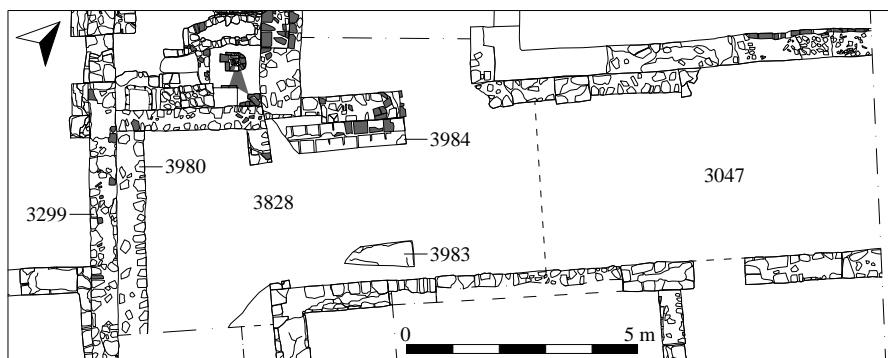


Figure 7.59. The former eastern entrance of the domus in Phase 11

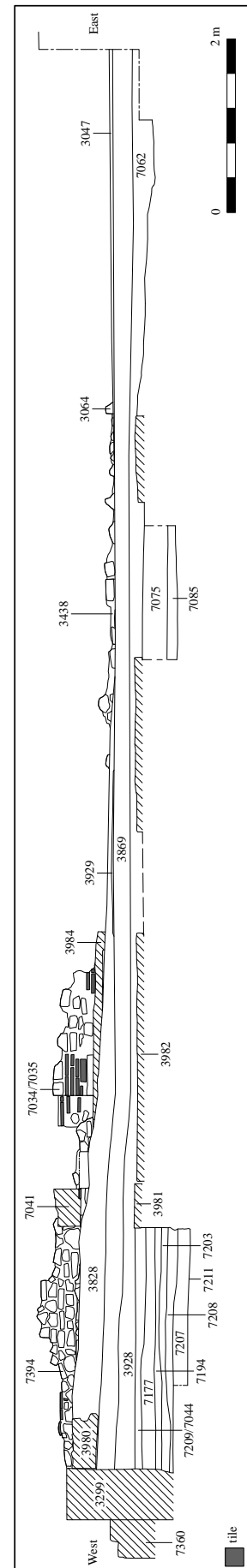


Figure 7.60. South-facing section through the former eastern entrance of the domus showing the Phase 11 features



Figure 7.61. Support wall 3980 built against the eastern wall of the basilica

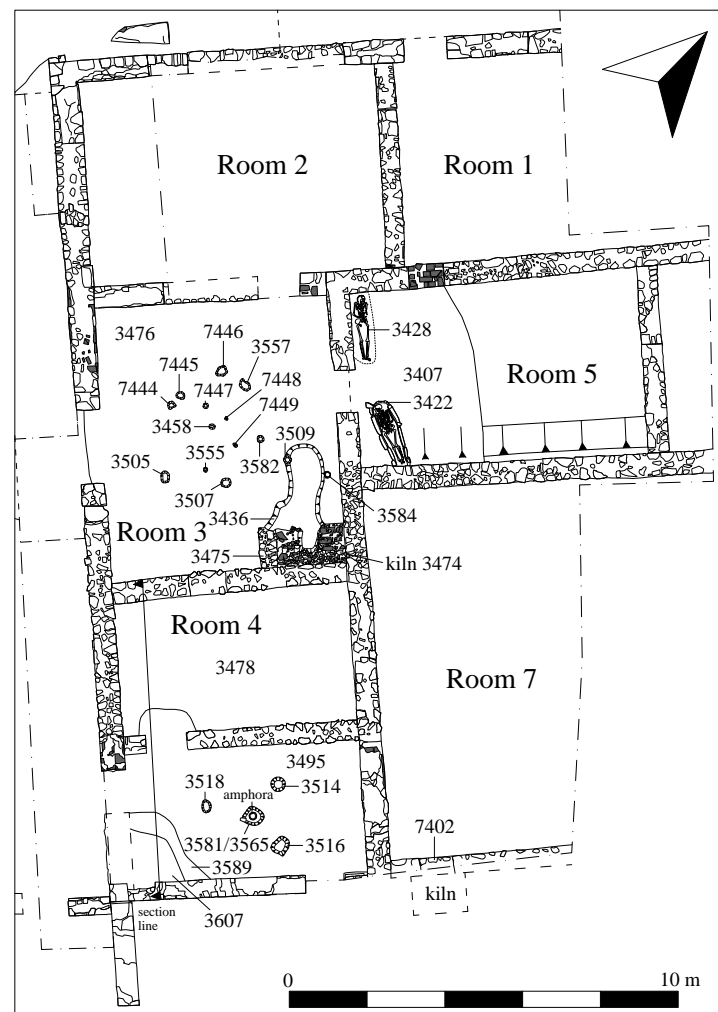


Figure 7.62. The former east wing of the domus showing the Phase 11 features

3557, 7444, 7445, and 7446) 0.18–0.28 m in diameter, with a further five smaller stake-holes (3555, 3458, 7447, 7448, and 7449) positioned inside it, the structure was pentagonal in shape (2.08 m in width by 2.60 m in length) and possibly acted as a shelter for those using the kiln.



Figure 7.63. Kiln 3474 in the southeast corner of Room 3 (2 m scale)

As well as covering Room 3, layer 3476 also extended through the room's eastern door, sealing the blocking 3429 and, as layer 3407, covered the western end of Room 5. There was no sign of industrial activity in this room and it is possible this area may have been an outside space, the roof having collapsed in the intervening period.

Further industrial activity seems to have occurred in the room to the south of Room 7. Although this area was not excavated, the clay bonding of the blocking wall 7402 between walls 3598 and 3599 was a noticeably dark orangey-red colour, indicative of it having been subjected to intense heat. Running through the whole visible width of the wall, this intensity in colouring does not seem to have derived from a one-off fire but rather through prolonged heat over a number of firings, implying that a hearth or kiln was located in the northwest corner of the unexcavated room beyond. The residue from this activity appears to have been spread across the room to the west of the kiln (also unexcavated) and extended through the door into the southern room of Room 4, as indicated by a layer of black silt and ash (3495). This layer (3495) entirely covered the room and also extended a short way through the door into the connecting northern room, where it covered the earlier Phase 7 tile floor 3478 (see Fig. 7.62). Mixed in with this deposit were various lumps of corroded iron (including SFs 6570, 6572, 6576 and 6580) that appear to be wasters and imply the hearth/kiln in the southeastern room was involved in iron working. Radiocarbon dating of charcoal from layer 3495 has produced a calibrated age of AD 680–880 (1241 ± 30 BP)²⁸ for timber used in at least one of the firings of the kiln, while the pottery from the layer covers the 9th–11th

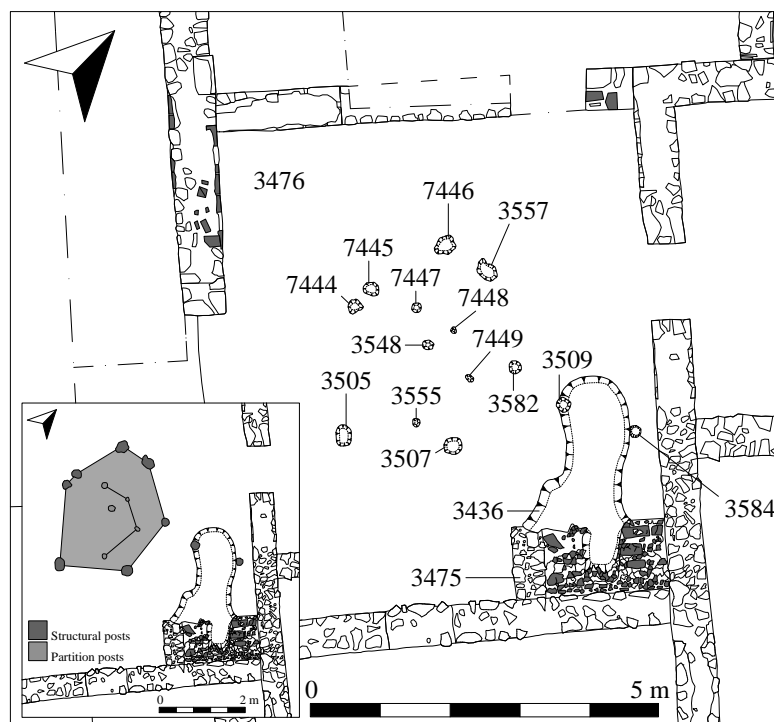


Figure 7.64. Plan and reconstruction of kiln 3474 and associated post-built structure

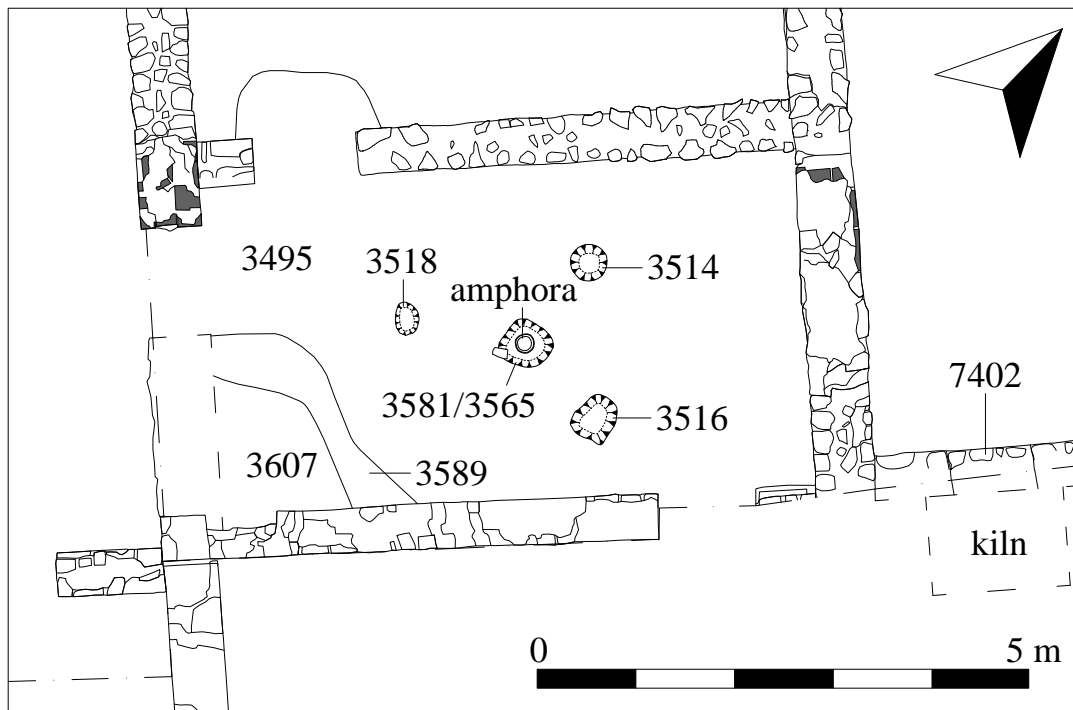


Figure 7.65. Phase II features in the southern room of Room 4



Figure 7.66. The southern room of Room 4, looking east, showing the Phase II post-holes 3514, 3516, 3518 and 3581/3565 cutting the earlier Phase 7 layer 3513. Amphora 3564 can be seen within cut 3581/3565 (2 m scale)

centuries. Animal bone as well as part of a large iron knife (SF 6593) from 3495 implies some domestic activity was taking place within the southern rooms.

Following the build-up of layer 3495 in the southern room, a series of post-holes (3514, 3516 and 3518) was cut through it (Fig. 7.65). Two of these cuts (3514 and 3516), at the eastern end of the room, were aligned roughly north–south and may have formed the supports of a partition wall dividing the room in two. Within the western room, just to the northwest of post 3516, a small pit (3581/3565) was cut through 3495. An amphora (3564) had then been

deliberately placed upright within the pit prior to its backfilling (by 3608/3566), possibly to act as a container either for water or provisions (Fig. 7.66). A yellowy-brown mortar deposit (3589) noticed overlying 3495 across the western part of the area is thought to have formed a rough surface within the room, with a thin silty clay layer (3607) overlying 3589 representing the accompanying occupation horizon (Fig. 7.67).

At some point, either during the period of industrial use or slightly after it, two burials were inserted along the western side of Room 5 (Fig. 7.68). The northern burial was of an adult male aged 30–40 years old (3428) (Fig. 7.69).²⁹ Buried in a supine position with the hands placed over the pelvis, the body had been laid on top of mosaic floor 115 and was aligned with wall 3418, with the head to the north. A bronze coin of Constantine I (AD 337–41) (SF 5106/Cat. 115) was found over the pelvis and may have originally been placed in the individual's hand. This coin may have been a keep-sake as AMS radiocarbon dating of the individual produced a calibrated date of AD 690–900 (1200 ± 40 BP).³⁰ The southern burial (3422) was slightly different as this individual, a male 25–30 years old (3414), had been buried in a stone-lined grave and was aligned almost true east–west, matching those burials found within the infilled Roman pool to the west (Fig. 7.70). As well as limestone slabs, a fragment of *cocciopesto* flooring, presumably from one of the surrounding rooms, had been used to form the lining (3421). The body had been laid in a supine position with the head to the west, the left arm placed over the chest, the right arm over the pelvis, and the legs extended. Covering the grave were six large limestone blocks (3411) (Fig. 7.71).

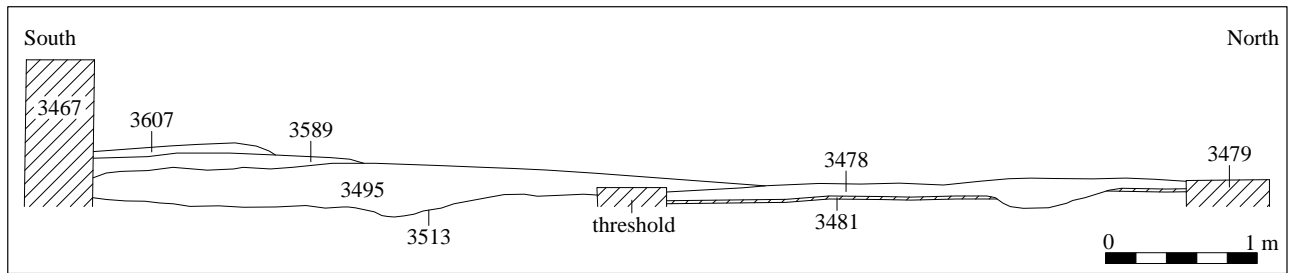


Figure 7.67. Section across Room 4 showing the Phase II deposits. See Fig. 7.62 for location

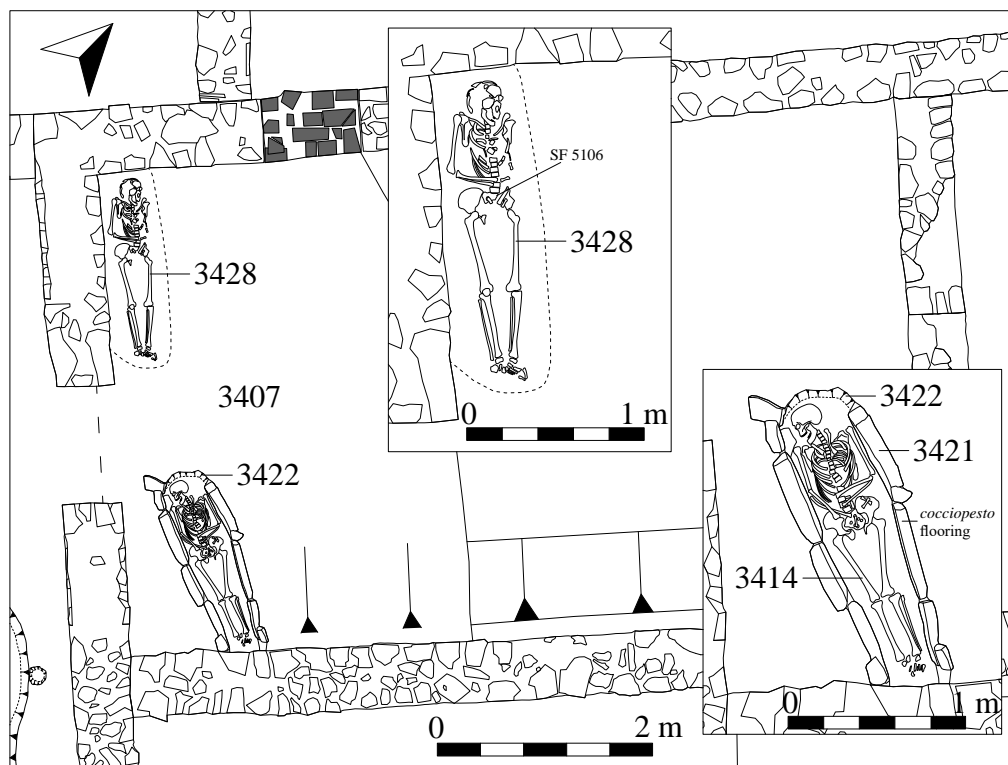


Figure 7.68. Phase II graves in Room 5



Figure 7.69. Skeleton 3428 laid on top of mosaic 115 (1 m scale)



Figure 7.70. Grave 3422 (1 m scale) (photo Massimo Zanfini)



Figure 7.71. Grave capping 3411 (1 m scale)

The western marine entrance and northwest buildings

As noted above, many of the buildings along this side of the complex had collapsed or had been demolished in the period following the abandonment of the basilica. A dark-grey silt had then covered them. Despite this, there are signs this area continued to be used during this period (Fig. 7.72).

Within the area of the corridor along the eastern side of the marine entrance a burial (7073) ($1.50 \times 0.80 \times 0.36$ m deep) of a child aged 8–12 years old was located dug through layer 7057 (Fig. 7.73). As layer 7057 was only 0.10 m thick at this point, the base of the grave was dug through the underlying *cocciopesto* floor (7248) of the earlier corridor (Fig. 7.74). The western end of the initial cut for the grave slightly clipped the top of wall 7240, the foundation wall of the marine entrance, which had been partially covered over by 7057. The northern edge of the grave had also been altered slightly due to the presence of a large square block of masonry that had been sealed by the *cocciopesto* floor. This block was subsequently incorporated into the lining of the grave (7081). The body (7080) had been buried in a supine position with the head at the western end, the arms placed across the chest and the legs extended. The feet of the individual were covered by a single capstone. An iron object (SF 6359) was found in the area of the pelvis-sacrum while a corroded iron chain-link (SF 6354) was found within the fill of the grave (7072).

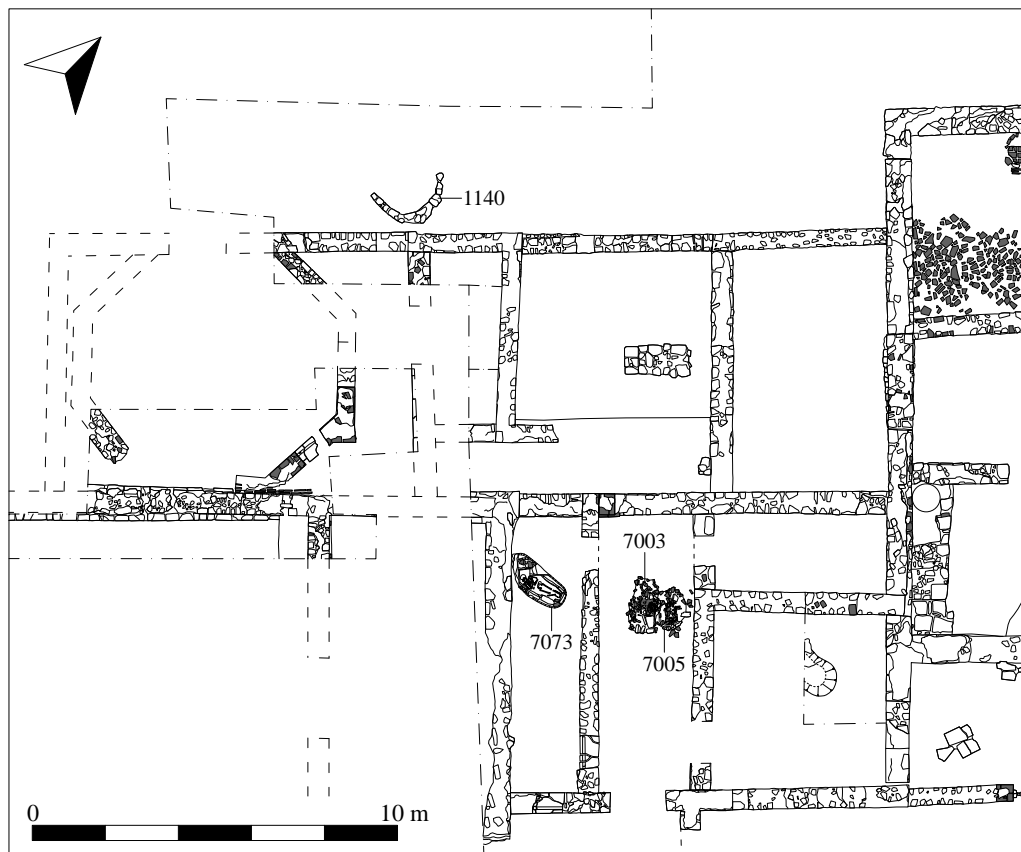


Figure 7.72. The western marine entrance and the northwest buildings in Phase II

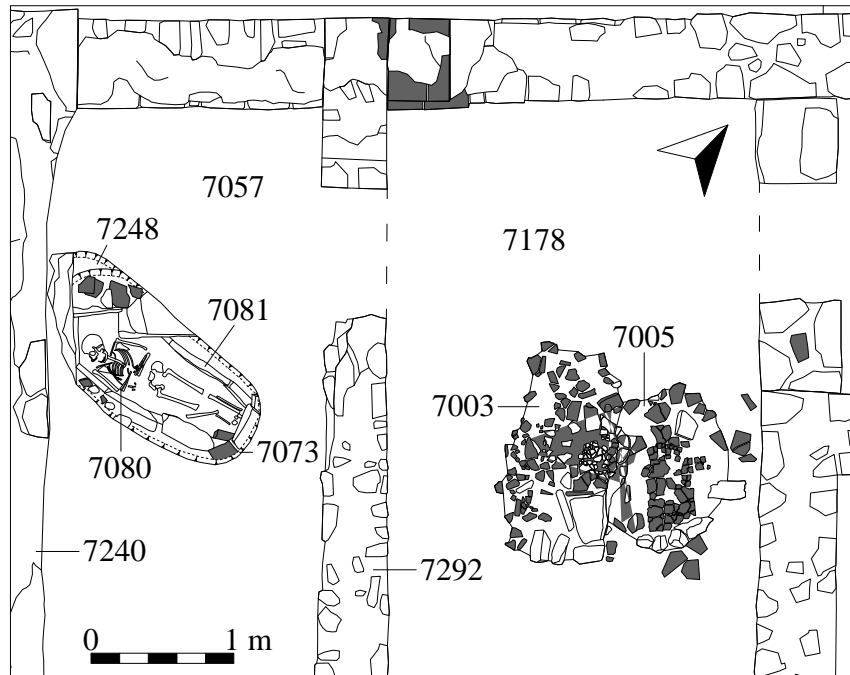


Figure 7.73. Phase II grave 7073 and oven 7005



Figure 7.74. Overhead view of grave 7073 (1 m scale)

Unfortunately no reliable dating evidence was found within the fill, but as the grave was aligned almost true east–west it is thought to be contemporary with the similarly aligned burials found within the infilled Roman ornamental pool to the south.

Further activity within this area was found to the east of wall 7292 where a small circular oven (7005) (0.80 m in diameter) was located (Fig. 7.75). Cut through layer 7178, the structure comprised a limestone surround with a tile base which had become fire-cracked through use. Sealing the oven was a mix of broken tiles and limestone set within a dark brown-black silty clay matrix (7003) that probably represents a mix of the oven's last firing along with the collapse of its superstructure. A rim fragment from an Otranto 1 amphora was found within this deposit along with a fragment of cooking pot still with ash on it, presumably from the firing of the oven. A rectangular copper alloy buckle with heart-shape endings (SF 6278)



Figure 7.75. Oven 7005. Layer 7003 can be seen partially covering the western edge of the oven (1 m scale)



Figure 7.76. Circular structure 1140. The northern end of this structure was removed by the cutting of the 1960s drainage ditch

dating to the 8th–10th century was also found within this deposit (see Volume II, Fig. 6.15).

To the north, it is unclear if the Phase 7 two-storey building built at the western end of the basilica was still standing at this time. As the external staircase indicated by the foundation block 7045 appears to have been removed (see above) this may suggest the building had suffered the same fate as the other northwestern buildings. However, the lack of any obvious deposits dating to the period of abandonment within the building may, on the other hand, suggest that it did in part survive as a structure into this period.

Despite this uncertainty, a circular structure with a stone-built foundation (1140) appears to have been constructed to the west of the building during this period (Fig. 7.76).³¹ Only the southern edge of the structure survives as the northern side was removed by the cutting of the drainage ditch but from what does survive it seems the structure had an internal diameter of 1.70 m. What it was used for is unclear as no obvious deposits relating to the structure survived, but it may have served as a small animal pen.

Summary/Interpretation

By the mid-9th century many of the buildings on the Vrina Plain were once more occupied, with the site appearing to become the provincial centre of an important member of the local élite. This new centre comprised a two-storey house built over the former narthex of the 6th-century basilica, the lower rooms possibly being used partially as storerooms, and an associated chapel located in the southern apse of the earlier basilica. Around the house a series of workshops was set up in the surviving eastern buildings, some of which may have been divided into separate dwellings. A further workshop was created in the former east aisle of the basilica following the blocking-in of the arcades. In time a small cemetery for some of the household retainers grew up around the outside of the chapel, while the burials of

possibly two members of the official's family were interred within the nave of the basilica.

As well as being involved in local affairs the household appears to have had wider economic and commercial connections as indicated by the discovery of a seal from an official in Constantinople (SF 6088). These connections are further emphasised when the finds discovered in the post-abandonment layers are brought into the discussion. These include a further four late 9th–10th-century lead seals. Of these, one was issued by John, *strategos* of Sicily (SF 5020) who at this time would have been residing in Calabria; another by Constantine, *strategos* of Dyrrhachium (SF 5005); and a third by Kallonas (SF 3468), who appears from his titles to have been connected to the central Imperial administration. The fourth was damaged and only the first two letters of the *strategos*'s name, Pi, were visible, suggesting the name Petros (SF 6030). Other finds included 51 Byzantine coins spanning the period from c. AD 820 to c. AD 1030/5–1042, with the vast majority, several in almost mint condition, belonging to the reign of Leo VI (AD 886–912). A silver *miliaresion* of the same emperor was also recovered.³² The ceramic finds from these deposits also distinguish this area at that time. While locally produced kitchen wares were the most common ceramic finds, wine amphorae from Otranto in Puglia made up almost 50% of the rest of the ceramic assemblage, showing a revival in trade with southern Italy.

The material culture, the coins and the seals clearly demonstrate that by the 10th century the household had become a centre of international, as well as regional, administration, with an important local official, probably an *archon*, living and working there. The need for such a centralised figure in this region at this time may have been to exploit the area's rich agricultural and marine produce.

By moving outside the old fortified urban area and occupying these ruins, the new order could control both the sea and overland access routes to Butrint. The household would also have been a dominant marker in the landscape in much the same way as the *domus* had been during the Roman era, being clearly visible from the walled town as well as from the Vivari Channel and the valley beyond. It would also have been a way in which the new order could differentiate itself from what had gone before, and in the process define 'a new Butrint' in administrative and economic terms in the period c. AD 840–950/1000.

Phase 12: late 10th to 11th century – demolition and burials

The administrative role of the building seems to have been maintained up to the late 10th century, after which it appears to have been abandoned. Subsequently, much of the superstructure of the main house and basilica appears to have been dismantled, with any usable building material probably being ferried across the Vivari Channel to be reused in the various construction projects being undertaken within Butrint at this time. In the intervening

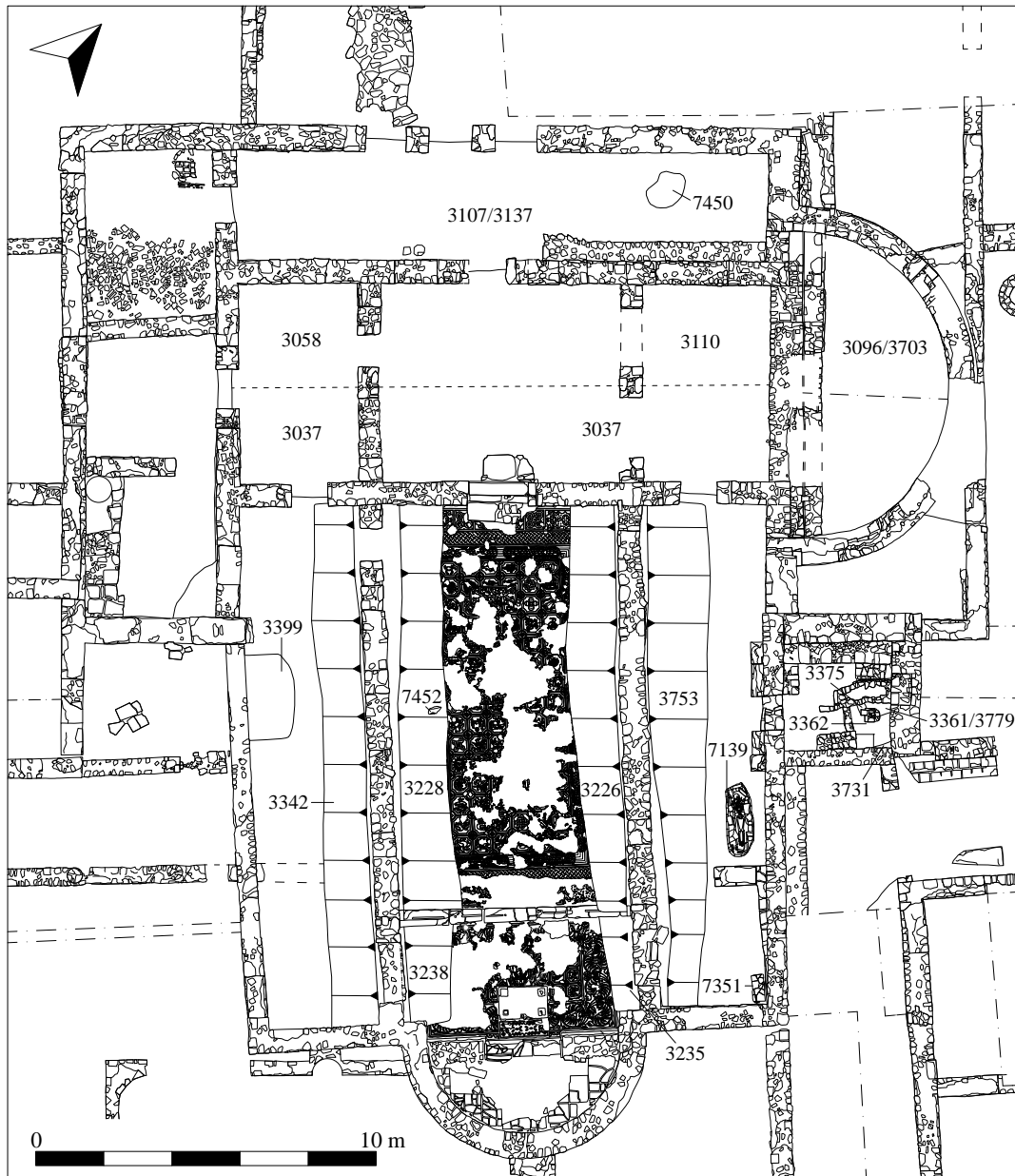


Figure 7.77. The Vrina Plain settlement showing areas of activity in Phase 12 (late 10th to 11th century)

period a number of burials were interred within the ruins of the aisles (Fig. 7.77).

The house and basilica

The lack of extensive concentrations of rubble and masonry from the layers found covering the remains suggests much of the upper structure of the house was dismantled soon after the site was abandoned. As part of this action the posts holding up the first-floor hall would also have been removed. In order to get rid of any unusable building material, those involved in the demolition work seem to have built a fire in the northeast corner of the central space. Constructed over the flagstone cut by post 3852, the fire caused this stone to turn a reddish-orange

colour while the heat generated shattered the stones surrounding it.

The walls of the basilica and aisles were also partially dismantled during this period following the removal of the building's roof. In the western aisle two deposits of rubble and silt, one (3399) (2.50 × 1.40 m) situated against the inner face of wall 3084/3298 and the other (3903) (5 × 1.05 m) spread against the blocking walls of the arcade at the southern end of the room, are thought to relate to this period.

Following this robbing activity the area appears to have been left open and a thin, dark-grey silt layer containing finds left from the occupation of the house soon built up within the surviving shell of the former narthex (3037/3058/3110) and exonarthex (3107/3137)

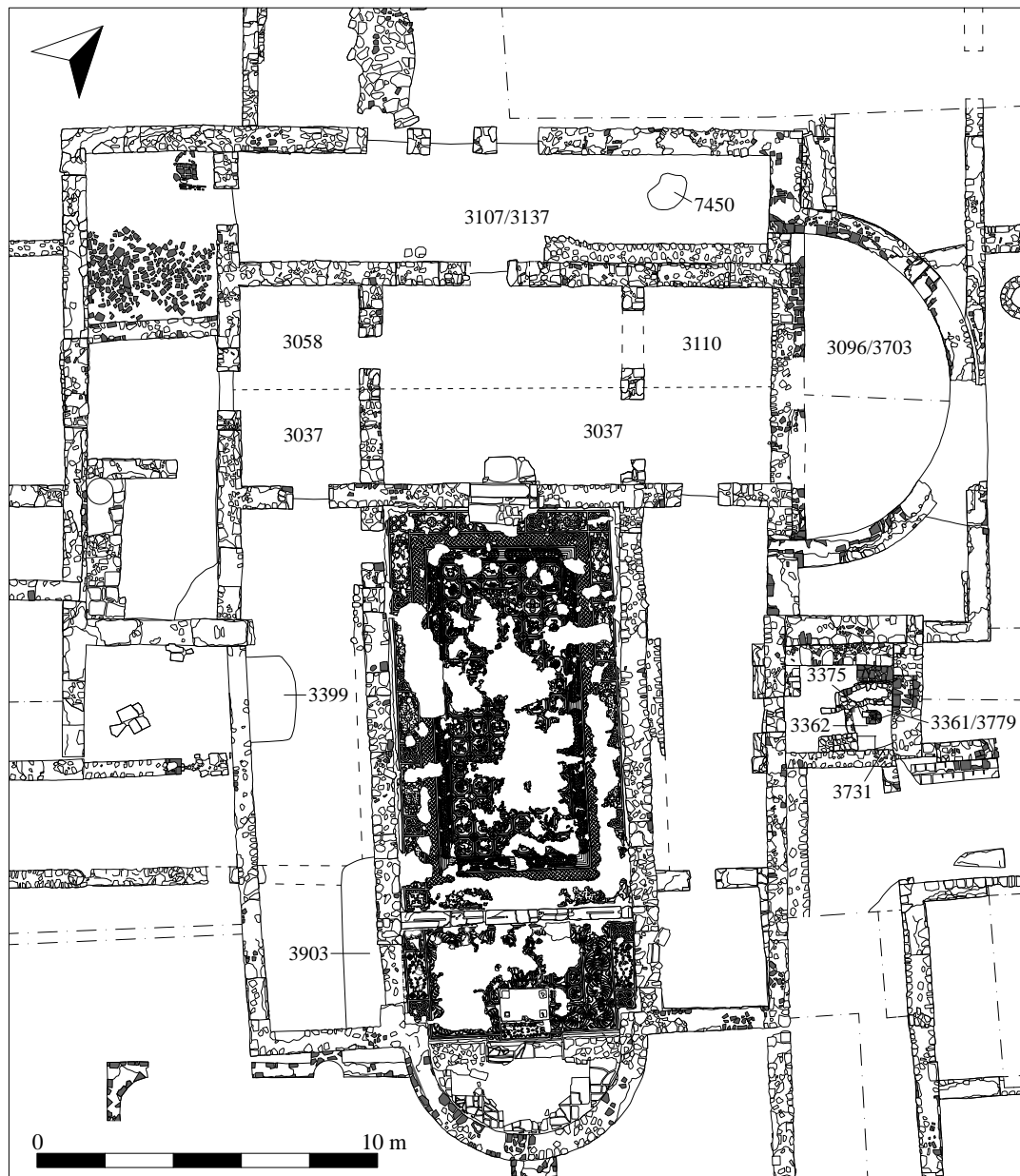


Figure 7.78. Phase 12 abandonment deposits within the shell of the building. A layer of mussel shells (7450) in the former exonarthex may suggest some small-scale processing activity took place here

(Fig. 7.78).³³ A similar dark-grey silt (3096/3703) built up within the eastern apse of the earlier building. Ceramics dating to the 10th–11th century were recovered from these layers and included a body sherd of a Glazed White Ware II vessel from layer 3110 (see Volume 6.2, Chapter 1). A number of coins were also recovered from layer 3037, including two of Leo VI (AD 886–912) (SF 3407/Cat. 15 and 3410/Cat. 16) and one of Constantine VII (AD 913–59) (SF 3404/Cat. 37), the latter having been over-struck onto a coin of Leo VI. Layer 3058 contained an iron knife blade (SF 3458) as well as various other iron objects (SFs 3459, 3460 and 3466), while layer 3110 contained 45 strips of flattened iron (SF 3472).³⁴

The superstructure of the kiln in the small room off

the east aisle also collapsed in this period (3361/3779), sealing a series of grey silts (3732, 3731, 3375 and 3362) that had built up in the main chamber following its disuse. As well as containing frequent fragments of tile, limestone and burnt clay from the walls of the kiln, these deposits also contained some distinctive rim-handle fragments of cooking pots that were possibly manufactured in the kiln.

A patch of crushed mussel shells (7450) overlying layer 3107/3137 may suggest some small-scale mussel-processing activity took place within the former exonarthex at some point in this period, but in general the site was left alone.

Three burials were interred within the aisles during this period. Within the western aisle a large, robustly built

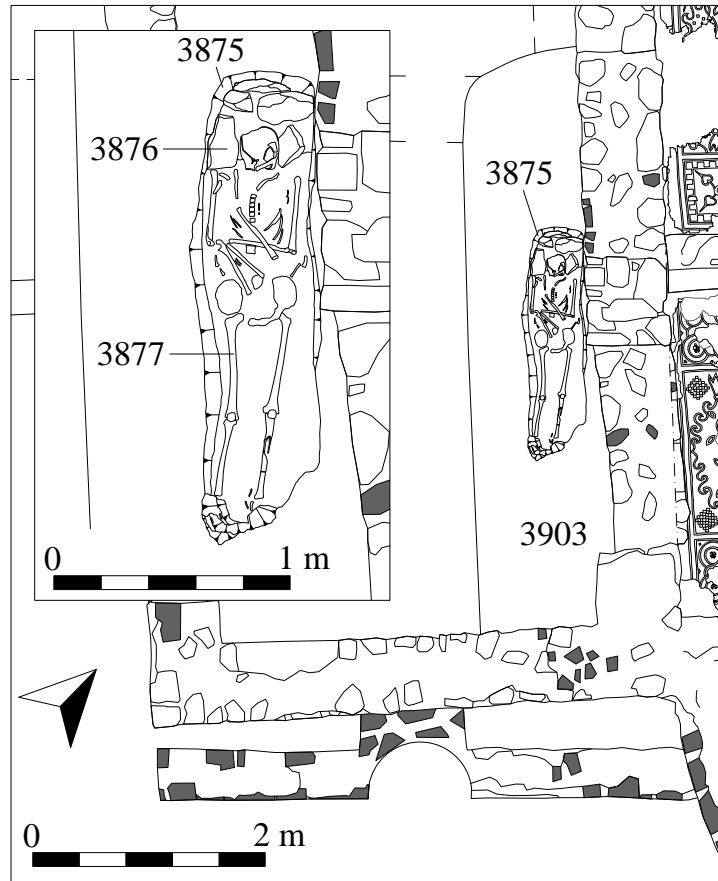


Figure 7.79. Grave 3875 at the southern end of the former west aisle



Figure 7.80. Overhead view of grave 3875 (1 m scale)

young adult male, aged 25–30 years old (3877) was buried at the southern end of the room (Fig. 7.79). Orientated north–south, the grave (3875) was sub-oval in shape (1.94 m by 0.52 m) and was positioned up against the blocking wall 3281 and pier 3280. Due to the shallow nature of layer 3903, the base of the grave was cut through the underlying tile surface 3334. The body (3877) had been buried in a supine position with the head at the north end, the right arm placed over the pelvis, the left arm laid across the chest

and the legs extended (Fig. 7.80). Around the head four roughly shaped stones, ranging in size from 0.16 m to 0.27 m, had been set on edge, with a fifth placed below it to form what appeared to be a pillow (3876) (Fig. 7.81). A further slab may have been placed over the skull to cover it once the body had been interred.³⁵ Within the grave fill (3878) a fragment of a coin (SF 6186/Cat. 141) of Constantius II (AD 335–61) was found below the individual's pelvis.

A possible contemporary burial was located in the



Figure 7.81. Detail of the pillow stones (3876) around the skull of skeleton 3877 and after removal of the skull (30 cm scale)

former eastern aisle (Fig. 7.82). Cut through the earlier tile surface 7094, grave 7139 was a vertical-sided cut 2.05×0.80 m lined with tile and limestone pieces (7157). Orientated north–south it contained the body of a young male, aged 20–25 years old (7156), buried in a supine position with the head to the north, the arms placed over the chest and the legs extended, with the feet crossed (Fig. 7.83). Covering the grave were eight large limestone slabs (7138) (Fig. 7.84). Mortar patches found on some of the slabs suggests these had been removed from the stylobate of the southern wall of the earlier *domus* portico, located just to the south of the grave, indicating this wall was still visible at this time. Once capped, a thin layer of silt built up over the stones (7137). This layer also trickled through the gaps in the capping and, as deposit 7158, covered the skeleton beneath. Fragments of a handle from possibly the same medieval cooking pot were found in both fills, along with pieces of a worn LRA 2 dating to the 6th century.

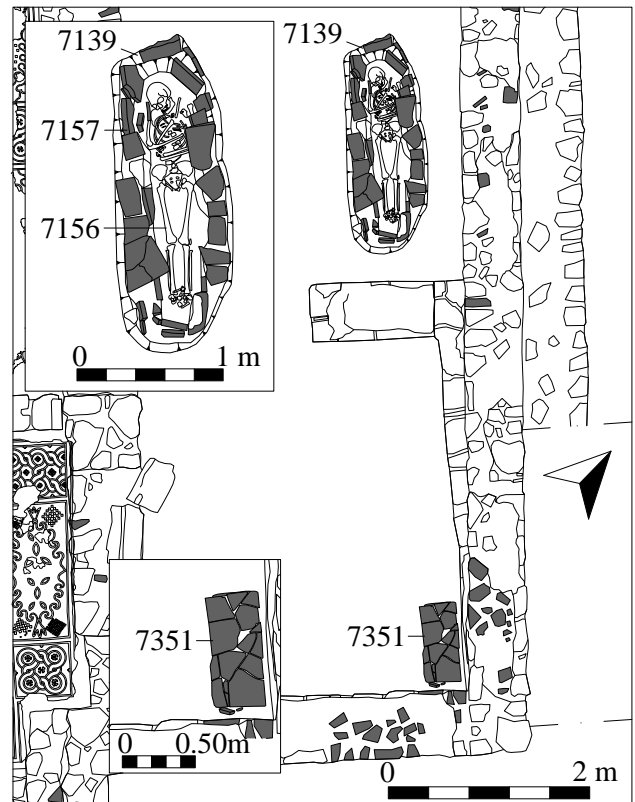


Figure 7.82. Graves 7139 and 7351 at the southern end of the former east aisle

A further burial (7351) was located in the southeast corner of the aisle, as indicated by a rectangular box-like structure formed from roof tiles (3951); the base and capping (3949) were formed with *imbrices*, while smaller broken pieces were used for the sides (Fig. 7.85). The internal space of the structure measured 0.64×0.32 m and was 0.16 m deep, while the capping tile 3949 measured 0.76×0.45 m and was 30 mm thick. Only a few fragmentary pieces of human bone were found within the deposit infilling the structure (3950) but from the size of the grave it seems it would have contained the body of an infant. While no dating evidence was found associated with the grave it is assumed to be contemporary with inhumation 7139 to the north of it as, like this grave, 7351 was also cut through the earlier tile surface of the aisle, presumably at a point when this room was no longer in use.

Soon after these burials were interred the blocking walls between the arcades of the basilica began to collapse and banks of green clay and rubble quickly built up along both sides of the nave (3226 and 3228) and sanctuary (3235 and 3238) as well as along the inner edges of both aisles (3753 and 3342) (Figs 7.86 and 7.87). In the western aisle, layer 3342 sealed burial 3877. Ceramics dating to the 10th–11th century were recovered from layers 3226, 3238 and 3342, while some later medieval pottery dating to the 12th–13th century from 3238 is probably intrusive. Layer 3342 also contained a slightly worn coin of Constantine VII (AD 913–59) (SF 6169/Cat. 28). Ground and rain water appears



Figure 7.83. Overhead view of grave 7139 (1 m scale)

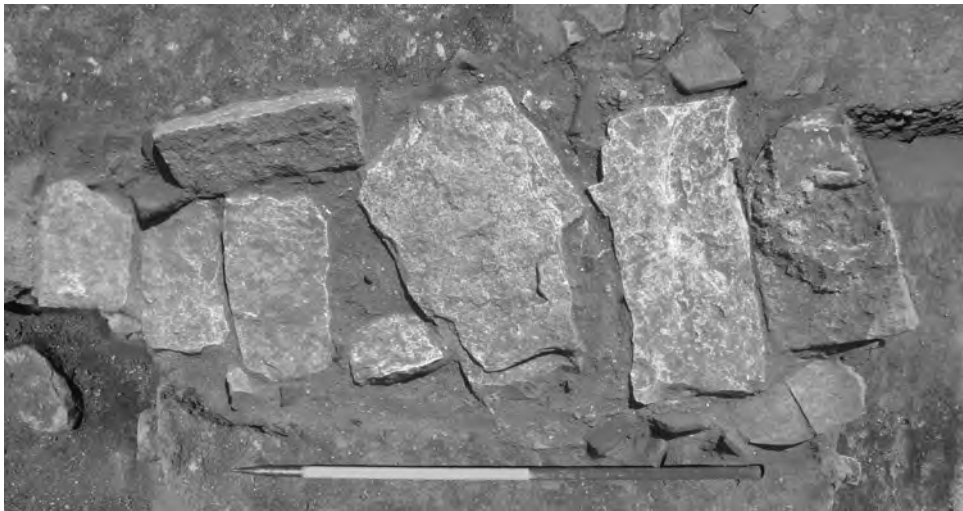


Figure 7.84. Grave capping 7138 (1 m scale)



Figure 7.85. Grave 7351 before and after excavation (50 cm scale)

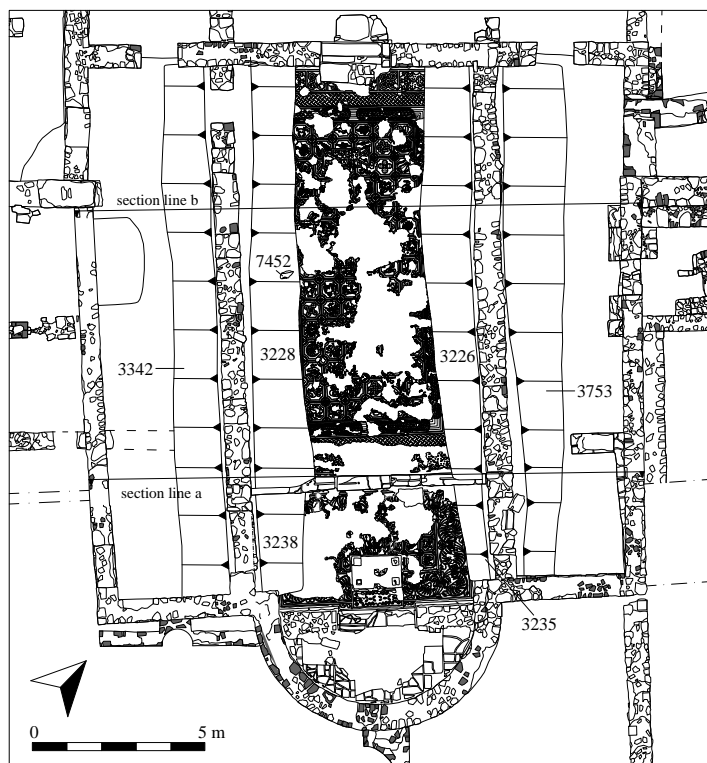


Figure 7.86. Blocking wall collapse across the aisles and nave of the basilica

to have subsequently collected across the nave and sanctuary as all the deposits showed signs of iron-pan staining.

Summary/Interpretation

The administrative household almost certainly abandoned the Vrina Plain for the walled town either shortly before or after AD 1000. Following this, much of the superstructure of the building appears to have collapsed and any usable material was removed. With occupation returning to the main city these structures would have been an ideal source of building material that could easily be exploited. Some of the stone may even have ended up being reused in the construction of the new fortifications being undertaken within Butrint at this time.³⁶ The demolition of the main house may also have been an attempt by the new powers to re-establish the focus of the town, removing any sign of the past.

A series of naturally accumulated silt layers subsequently built up across the ruins. The former religious association of the site does not seem to have been forgotten as various burials were inserted into the aisles. These interments were, in turn, followed by the collapse of the arcade blocking walls.

Problems with a rising water table may have caused this movement back into the defended centre, but it may also have been caused by a revival of Byzantine maritime commerce and with it the need for secure ports. In order to safeguard this, the replacement for the Vrina Plain aristocratic *oikos* was now situated at the western end of the acropolis, commanding access along the Vivari Channel as well as being clearly visible from the Straits of Corfu beyond.³⁷

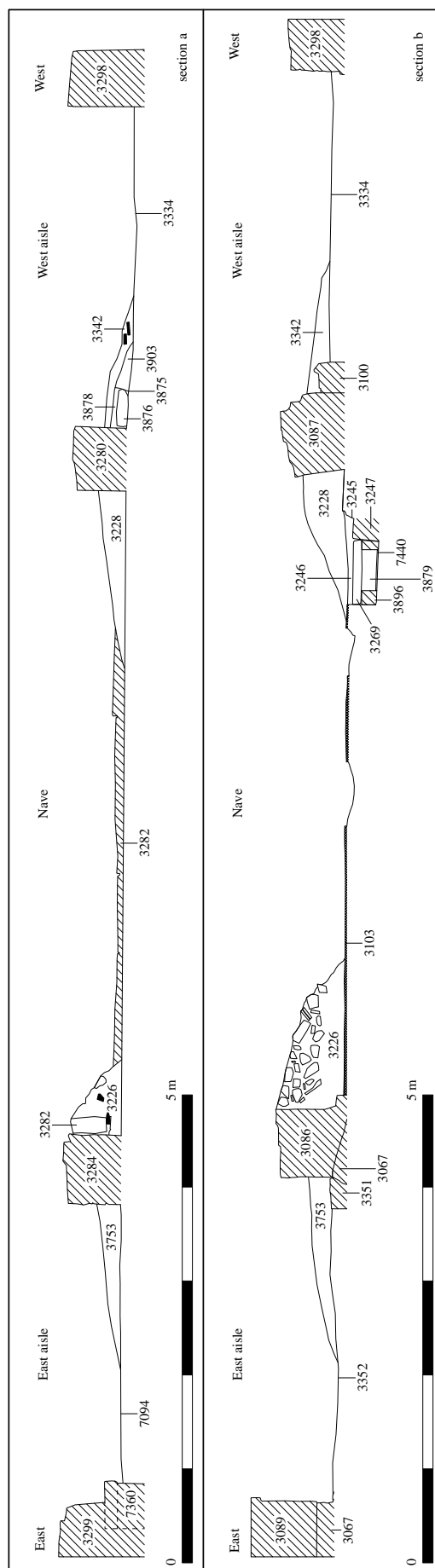


Figure 7.87. Sections across the aisles and nave showing the extent of the blocking wall collapse. See Fig. 7.86 for location

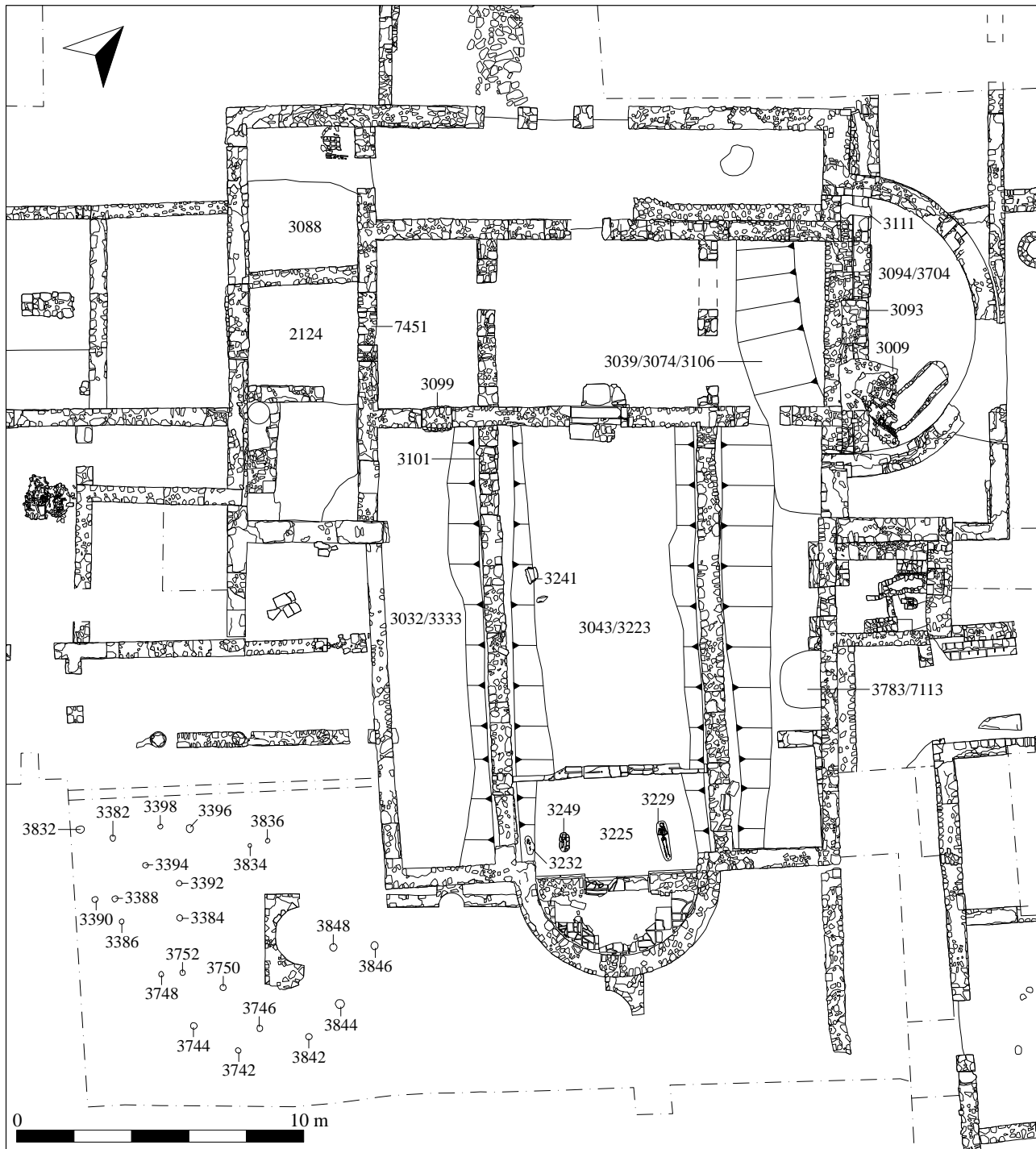


Figure 7.88. The Vrına Plain settlement showing areas of activity in Phase 13 (11th to 12th century)

Phase 13: 11th to 12th century – industry, religion and post-holes

Despite the abandonment of the building there are signs the ruins were still used periodically (Fig. 7.88). Some form of industrial activity once more began to be carried out within the ruins, as indicated by two kilns located in the apse of the earlier *domus*. The religious aspect of the site also seems to have returned, with a devotional element centred on the extant apse of the earlier basilica. To the west

of the basilica, the remains of various post-built structures were found cut through the black soils, suggesting some small-scale reuse of this area too.

The eastern apse

Unlike the rest of the walls of the aristocratic *oikos*, which had been quarried for stone, the eastern apse of the building partially remained standing. Possibly due to the protection

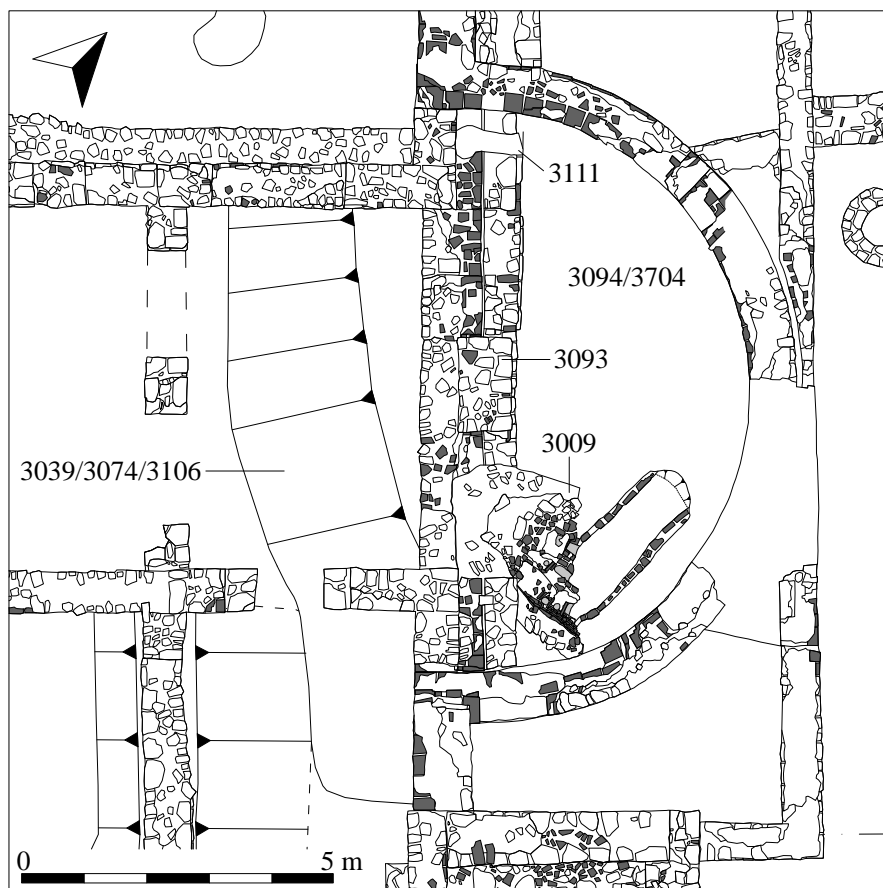


Figure 7.89. Plan of kilns 3009 and 3111 in the eastern apse



Figure 7.90. Pottery kiln 3009 in the eastern apse of the former apsidal hall (1 m scale) (photo Stuart Randall)

this would have given from the prevailing weather, two kilns were set up within this space (Fig. 7.89).

Kiln 3009 occupied the southeast corner of the apse (Fig. 7.90). Cut into layer 3096 and partially built over the line of the demolished wall 3130, the outer wall of the kiln was constructed of roughly shaped limestone blocks while



Figure 7.91. Detail of the three flues beneath the floor of kiln 3009

the inner face was of tile over which a clay daub had been spread to form a lining. The kiln's principal chamber was sub-rectangular in form measuring 1.55×1 m; a layer of broken tiles covered by clay formed the floor. Three small shafts c. 0.15 m in diameter had been incorporated into the kiln floor to allow the hot air from the flue to circulate within the chamber (Fig. 7.91). The main flue was aligned roughly northeast–southwest and followed the wall of the apse, giving the structure an almost L-shaped look. Measuring 2.80 m in length and 0.70 m in width internally, the base of the flue was cut through floor 3131. At its southern end the arched roof of the flue partially survived, indicating this had originally been 0.60 m high.

Just to the north of the kiln, and thought to be associated with it, was a small rectangular platform (3093) (see Fig. 7.89). Built over the demolished remains of walls 3092 and 3129/3130, the pots from the kiln may have been stacked on this feature either prior to or after firing.

Kiln 3111 was located in the northern corner of the apse. Measuring 1.20 m long and 0.40 m wide, the kiln had been cut through both walls 3092 and 3130. At the eastern end a shallow depression in layer 3096 seems to have acted as a firing chamber.

In order to access the apse, a layer of dark greyish-black silty clay (3039/3074/3106) was banked up against the western face of wall 3092 (see Fig. 7.89). Extending for almost 3 m to the west, the bank was steepest in the northeast corner where the door through wall 3092 was maintained. Ceramics dating to the 10th–11th century were recovered from these layers along with an iron awl (SF 3462) and a chisel (SF 3475), items probably discarded by those working in the apse.

This material had also been spread through the door of the east aisle, extending for another 3 m over the top of the tile surface 3095 and partially covering the northern end of the blocking wall collapse 3753. Just beyond the edge of this layer a large spread of ash (3783/7113) was found that appears to have been a hearth (Fig. 7.92). Covering an area 2 m by 1.40 m, the hearth had been constructed over the fill of grave 7139 and had been used a number of times as the heat generated from it had discoloured the inner face of the eastern aisle wall 3299 behind it, turning the wall's mortar a bright-red colour. Fragments of pottery dating to the late 10th–early 11th century were found mixed in with 3783, including pieces from an Otranto 2 amphora.

How long the kilns were used for is unclear but the rakings from the working of the kilns (3094/3704) were found covering the apse and contained ceramics dating to the 10th–11th and 11th–12th centuries, suggesting these kilns were in use throughout this period. Two residual coins of Leo VI (AD 886–912) (SFs 3481/Cat. 17 and 6103/Cat. 7) were also found mixed within this layer. Of these, SF 6103 was a silver *miliaresion* which was found at the end of the kiln's flue; the top edge of the coin had been broken off in antiquity.

A very dark grey/black silt (3032/3333) located in the west aisle is thought to be connected with this industrial



Figure 7.92. Hearth 3783/7113 (2 m scale)



Figure 7.93. Layer 3032/3333 in the west aisle during excavation, looking south (1 m scale)

activity (Fig. 7.93). Banked up against wall 3084/3298 to a depth of 0.40 m, the eastern edge of this possible midden covered the blocking collapse 3342 and contained frequent fragments of shell and animal bone as well as ash (Fig. 7.94). A small decorated bone gaming-piece (SF 6127), as well as an astragalus bone (SF 6435) which may have been used for gaming too, were also recovered from this layer. Ceramics dating to the 10th–11th and 11th–12th centuries from this layer cover a similar date range to those found in connection with the use of the kilns in the eastern apse,

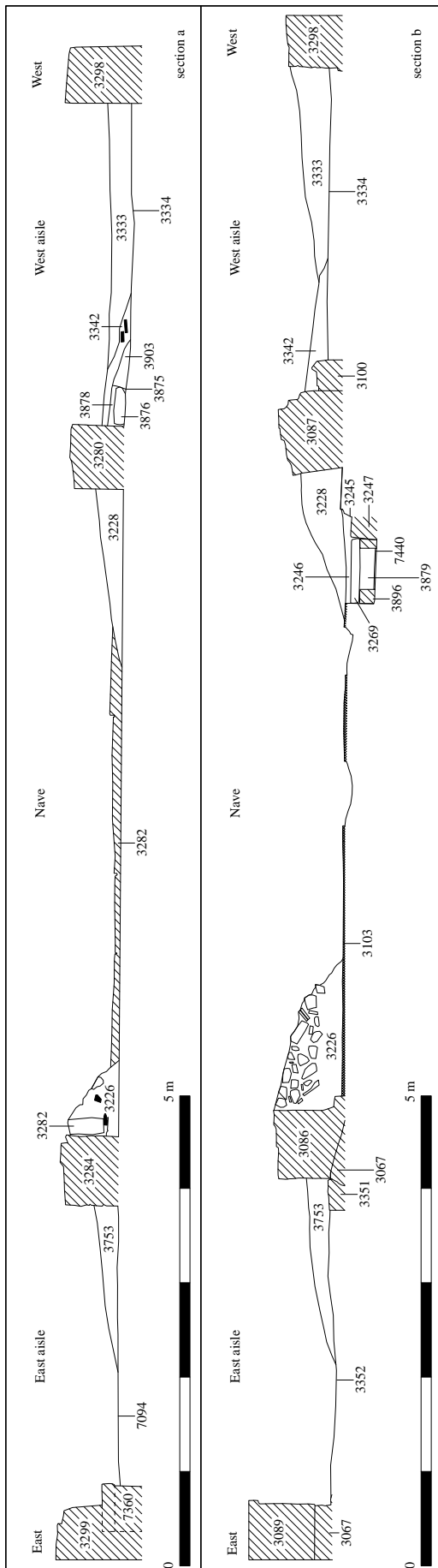


Figure 7.94. Sections across the aisles and nave showing the extent of layer 3032/3333. See Fig. 7.86 for location



Figure 7.95. Blocking wall 3099 built across the northern doorway of the west aisle (20 cm scale)

suggesting this midden layer may in part derive from these workings. Mixed in with this layer was a residual stem fragment of a small chalice or lamp of Glazed White Ware I, thought to date to the later 8th/9th century (see Volume 6.2, Chapter 1).³⁸ This ware is rare not only for Butrint but for the region as a whole; indeed, this particular variant has never been found even in Italy.³⁹ The rarity of the piece, and the fact that the date of it coincides with the foundation of the aristocratic *oikos*, may suggest the chalice belonged to the owner of the Vrina Plain house. A coin of Michael II (AD 820–29) (SF 6014/Cat. 1) was also recovered from this layer and represents the earliest recorded datable coin find from the reoccupation of the house.

Once this layer had been deposited in the aisle two rough blocking walls (3099 and 3101) were constructed across the northern and eastern doorways into this space in order to close it off (Fig. 7.95 and 7.96; see also Fig. 7.18). A further blocking wall was constructed across the doorway from the narthex into the western chamber (7451). This blocking may have been necessary as this western area of the building appears to have collapsed, a spread of rubble and greenish clay, fallen from wall 2118/3140, being found in both the northern and central rooms (layers 3088 and 2124 respectively). Mixed within 3088 were a number of items possibly lost or discarded following the last use of the room; these included a copper alloy lamp hook (SF 3471), a copper alloy chain (SF 3473), and a copper alloy buckle (SF 3474).

The southern apse and nave

Along with the industrial activity, the southern end of the basilica also seems to have remained a focal point at this time, with a devotional element centred on the extant apse of the earlier building (Fig. 7.97). A column drum of pink marble found in a later cut (3265) dug through the apse floor (see below) may have been set up in the apse to form a rough altar.

The sanctuary was infilled (3225) to raise the level to that of the floor of the apse.⁴⁰ This deposit, containing ceramics



Figure 7.96. Blocking walls 3099, 3101 and 7451

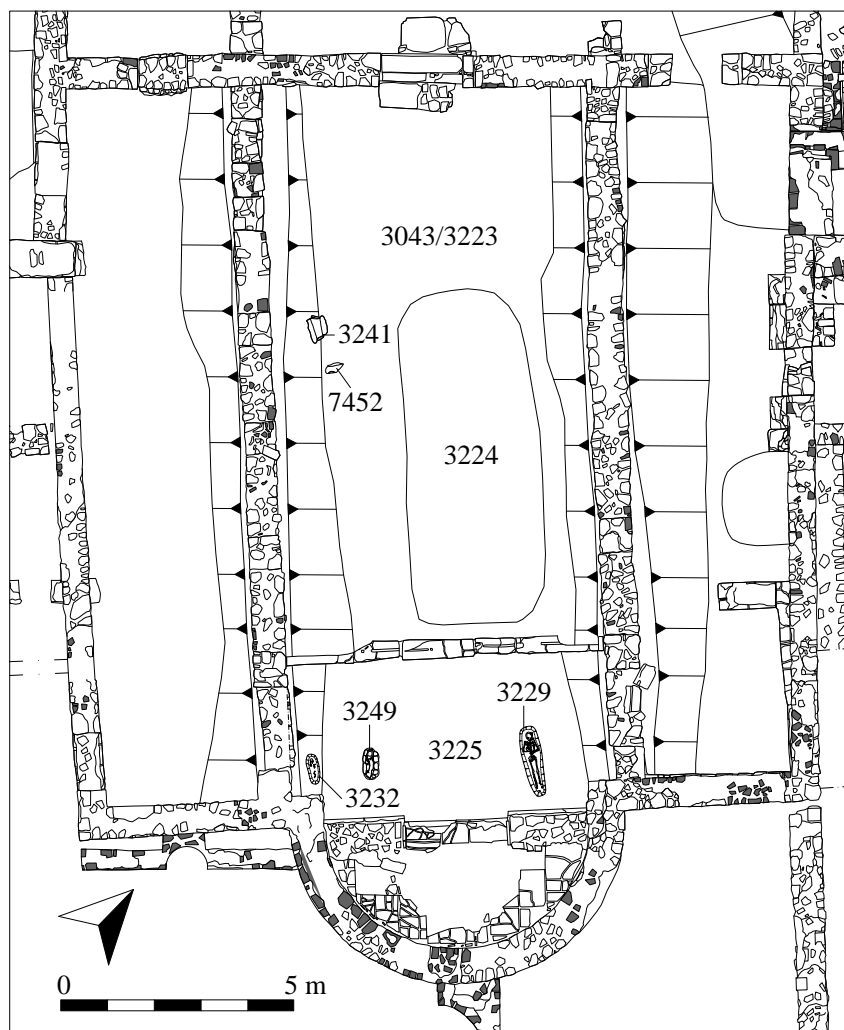


Figure 7.97. The southern apse and nave in Phase 13

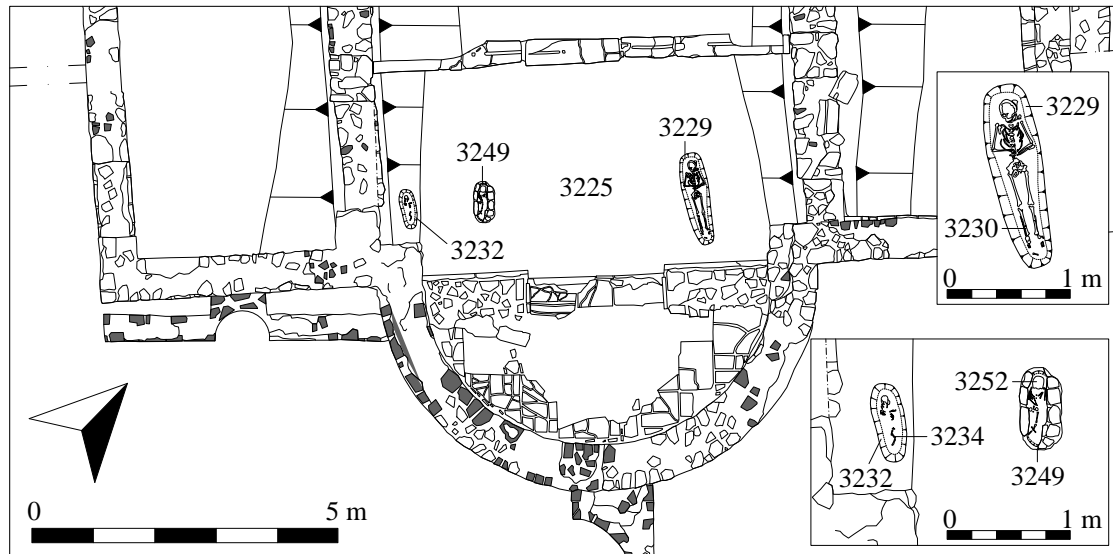


Figure 7.98. Phase 13 graves 3229, 3249 and 3232 in the former sanctuary

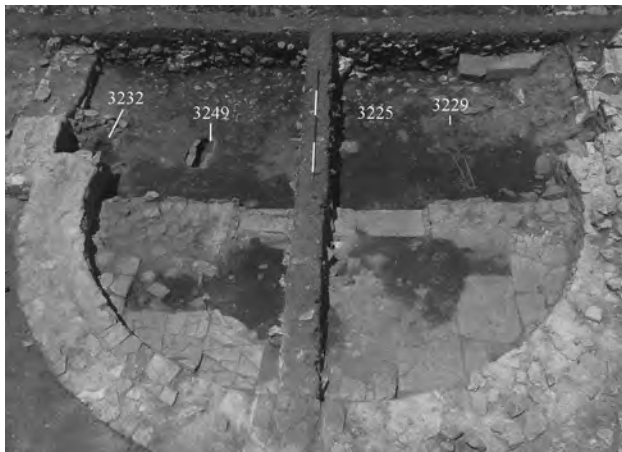


Figure 7.99. Phase 13 graves 3229, 3249 and 3232 cut through layer 3235, during excavation (2 m scale)

dating to the 10th–11th and 11th–12th centuries, covered the wall collapse 3235 and 3238 as well as the foundation of the altar suggesting that the focus of this new space was now the apse alone.

Following this, three burials were inserted into the space (Figs 7.98 and 7.99). Burial 3229 contained the body of a young child (3230) aged 7–9 years old (Fig. 7.100). Laid directly on top of the mosaic, the body had been buried in a supine position with the head facing south, the right arm across the chest, the left slightly below it and the legs fully extended. At the time of death this child was suffering severe scurvy (see Volume 6.2, Chapter 5). Burial 3249 lay to the west of 3229 (Fig. 7.101); this contained the body of a neonate infant (3252) aged 2 months, who had been laid in a well-built tile-lined and capped grave that had been cut through the mortar of the underlying mosaic (which was already damaged). The third burial (3232) was that of another neonate infant (3234), located up against

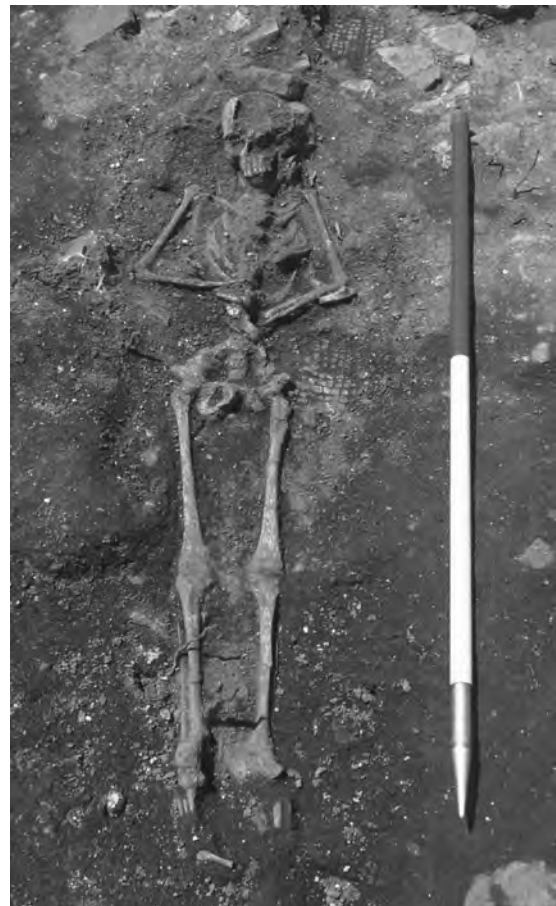


Figure 7.100. Grave 3229 (1 m scale)

the southern pier of the western arcade (Fig. 7.102). Cut through the blocking collapse 3238 the body had been laid on top of the earlier mosaic pavement. Two broken roof tiles (3227), with differing finger-swiped patterns, covered the grave (Fig. 7.103).



Figure 7.101. Grave 3249 (photo Massimo Zanfini)



Figure 7.102. Grave 102 (30 cm scale)

Access to this area remained via the former nave. Within this space, and abutting wall 3283, the lower half of which seems to have remained partially standing, a new rough tile surface was laid (3043/3223) (Fig. 7.104). Made up predominately of smashed roof tiles, some with maker's finger swirls on them, this layer sealed the collapse from the arcades (Fig. 7.105). A few fragments of 10th–11th-century pottery were found mixed in with this layer, along with three corroded 4th–5th-century coins (SFs 5152/Cat. 235, 5153/Cat. 506 and 5159/Cat. 362). Across the central part of the surface was a thin trample layer (3224). The foot stone of grave 3245 (7452) remained partially sticking out of this layer. Just to the north of this stone, a cut was located (3241) in which a small stone and tile ossuary box (3240) containing the skull and parts of the vertebrae, sacrum and scapula of a 20–30-year-old male (3239) had been placed (Fig. 7.106). A rectangular stone, which was

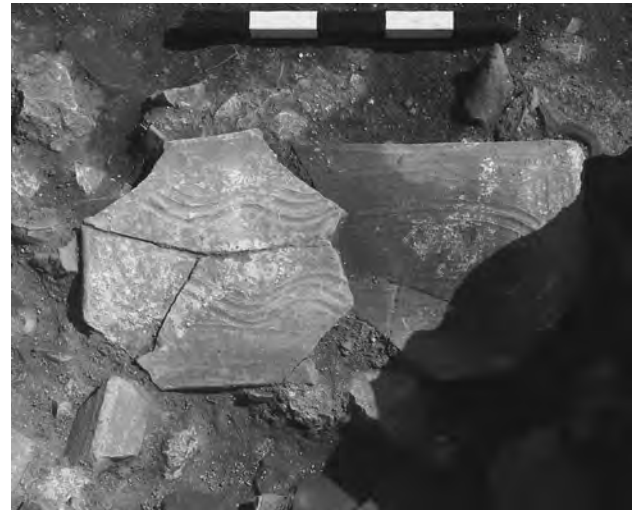


Figure 7.103. Grave capping 3227 (50 cm scale)



Figure 7.104. Tile surface 3043/3223 within the former nave, during excavation

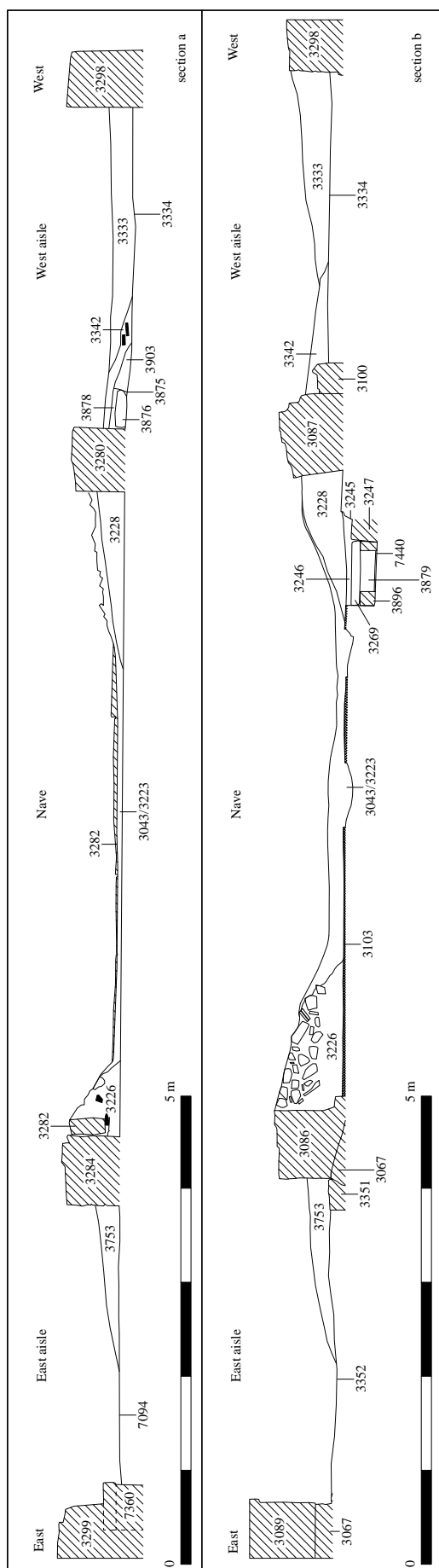


Figure 7.105. Sections across the aisles and nave showing the extent of layer 3043/3223. See Fig. 7.86 for location



Figure 7.106. Ossuary box 3240 (50 cm scale)



Figure 7.107. View looking south of tile layer 3043/3223 partially excavated with the lid of the ossuary 3240 visible through it (2 m scale)

visible through the tile layer 3043/3223, formed the lid of the box (Fig. 7.107).

The courtyard

Across the western side of the former courtyard 18 post-holes were identified (Fig. 7.108).⁴¹ These post-holes varied in diameter, with two distinct groups: those measuring 0.13–0.15 m in diameter and those measuring 0.23–0.28 m; all are thought to have been *c.* 0.25 m deep, but at the time of excavation only post-holes 3388 and 3394 were seen to be cut through layer 3345. The area was carefully trowelled but due to the similarity of the post-hole fills to the surrounding deposits, no other cuts were noted. It was therefore decided to remove the overlying dark soils and thus only the bases of the cuts were revealed where they had been dug through the underlying greenish clay 3348 associated with Phase 7.



Figure 7.108. Post-holes across the western side of the former courtyard. These were cut from layer 3345 but due to the similarity of the posts' fills and 3345 the true extent of the cuts were only seen when the underlying Phase 7 layer 3348 was exposed

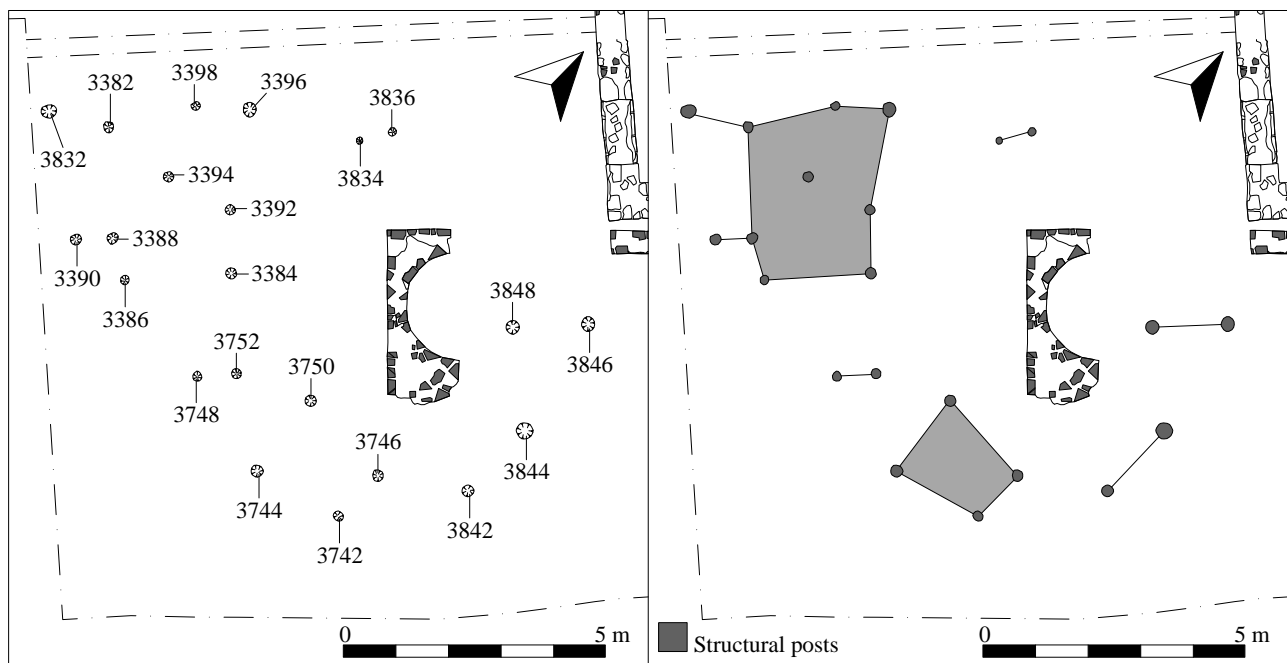


Figure 7.109. Plan and reconstruction of the Phase 13 post-built structure in the former courtyard

The posts seem to have outlined two possible structures, a northern one defined by post-holes 3382, 3384, 3386, 3388, 3392, 3396 and 3398 and a southern one defined by 3742, 3744, 3746, and 3750 (Fig. 7.109). The northern building appears to have been a roughly rectangular hut

3.02×2.37 m. An internal post indicated by post-hole 3394 may have been used to support the roof of the hut, while two posts located just to west of the building (3390 and 3832) may have formed a porch. The southern structure was somewhat smaller, measuring 1.85 m long and 1.64 m

to 1.11 m wide, and may have been used as an animal pen. The other posts appear to have been deliberately set in rows, with post-holes 3748 and 3752 placed in the space between the hut and the pen and post-holes 3834 and 3836 placed just to the northeast of the hut. These were either used to tether animals or to dry things between them.

Just to the east of these structures a further four contemporary post-holes were located. These post-holes (3842, 3844, 3846 and 3848) were 0.25 m diameter and had been cut into the western end of the former inner pool. Again they appeared to have been placed in two separate rows, with posts 3842 and 3844 forming one structure and 3846 and 3848 forming the other; they were probably used for a similar purpose to those located to the west.

The only piece of dating evidence for these structures came from a small plain fragment of medieval pottery from the backfill of post-hole 3392 (layer 3393).

Summary/Interpretation

Although many of the buildings had been quarried for stone following the abandonment of the aristocratic *oikos*, the ruins continued to be a conspicuous site upon the plain and were soon reused. Two kilns, one of which seems to have been a pottery kiln, were built in the apse of the earlier *domus*. The eastern end of the basilica also remained a focal point from the 11th to 12th century, with a devotional element centred on the extant apse of the earlier building.

Within the former courtyard a series of post-holes suggest one or more timber structures were erected over this space. These modest buildings, which may have included a small hut, an animal pen and a number of tethering posts or drying racks, presumably served a community working the plain at this time. Similar small post-built structures also characterised the community living beside the Vivari Channel in the Triconch Palace and Merchant's House at this time.⁴² It is also perhaps worth noting that similar insubstantial buildings, normally with walls of reeds, clay and daub, and roofs of reeds, existed within the general area of Butrint until the modern era, as Luigi Maria Ugolini observed in the inter-war period.⁴³

Phase 14: late 12th to 13th century – abandonment and collapse

The activities referred to as Phase 13 lasted only a short period and by the end of the 12th century the ruins were once more left to decay (Fig. 7.110).

The basilica and house

The devotional use of the southern apse appears to have been short-lived. The reason for this is unclear, but as the central step into the southern apse (3258) is severely fire cracked, it may be that a fire in this central space once more caused it to be abandoned. Following this, a large, roughly oval-shaped cut (3265) (2.35 m long by 1.58 m wide and

0.59 m deep) was dug in the centre of the apse, presumably to remove the relic-deposit thought to have been located there (Fig. 7.111; cf Fig. 6.9).⁴⁴ In the process of digging the cut, a number of the stone slabs flooring the apse were removed. At the base of the cut, the northeast corner of the pool of the earlier *domus* was revealed. A green gritty deposit (3264), matching the make-up layer through which the cut had been dug (3266), had subsequently slumped back into the hole. This deposit (3264), which presumably had been placed around the edge of the cut when the hole was dug, contained a fragment of glazed medieval pottery. The pink marble column noted above that may have been used as a rough altar was found dumped within this deposit. A darker-brown clay silt layer (3263) had then built up over the column, infilling the northern side of the cut. This in turn was covered by a thin greyish sandy silt (3222). As well as infilling the area where the floor slabs had been removed, layer 3222 also covered the burnt step 3258 and extended across the central area of the former sanctuary (Fig. 7.112). Ceramics dating to the 10th–11th and 11th–12th centuries were recovered from this layer.

Soon after this, the apse wall collapsed (Fig. 7.113). Much of the actual building material used to construct the apse seems to have been robbed, suggesting the collapse may have been deliberate. Before the rubble was taken away the mortar around the blocks was removed; this material was then dumped across the apse and sanctuary (3217) (Fig. 7.114), partially extending to the south of the apse (as layer 3231). Four fragments of a Brown and Green Painted Ware dish dated to the second half of the 12th century, found lying on the flagstones of the apse directly below 3217, provides a *terminus post quem* for this occurrence.

Whilst this was happening at the southern end of the building, the outer wall of the east aisle (3089/3299) partially collapsed inwards (3344/3888), covering the remains of hearth 3783/7113 (Fig. 7.115). The walls of the small room located to the east of the aisle also partially fell down at this time (3328/3346/3363), sealing the collapsed kiln beneath and infilling pit 3801 (by layer 3727). Soon after this occurred, the blocking walls between the arcades began to deteriorate further and additional banks of green clay and rubble built up along the sides of both aisles: layer 3331 along the west aisle and layer 3343/3327 along the east aisle (Fig. 7.116). The eastern blocking wall also slumped into the nave, as indicated by a second spread of green clay (3221) found partially overlying the tile surface 3223 and trample layer 3224. Following this, the remaining part of wall 3089/3299 suffered a further major collapse as indicated by a thick rubble spread (3326) found overlying layer 3343/3327 (Fig. 7.117). This layer (3326) partially extended into the former kiln room where it sealed a second layer of collapsed rubble (3336) that had fallen from the surrounding walls and built up over the earlier collapse. The outer wall of the west aisle (3084/3298) also seems to have collapsed inwards at some point during this period, as indicated by a thick spread of rubble (3332)

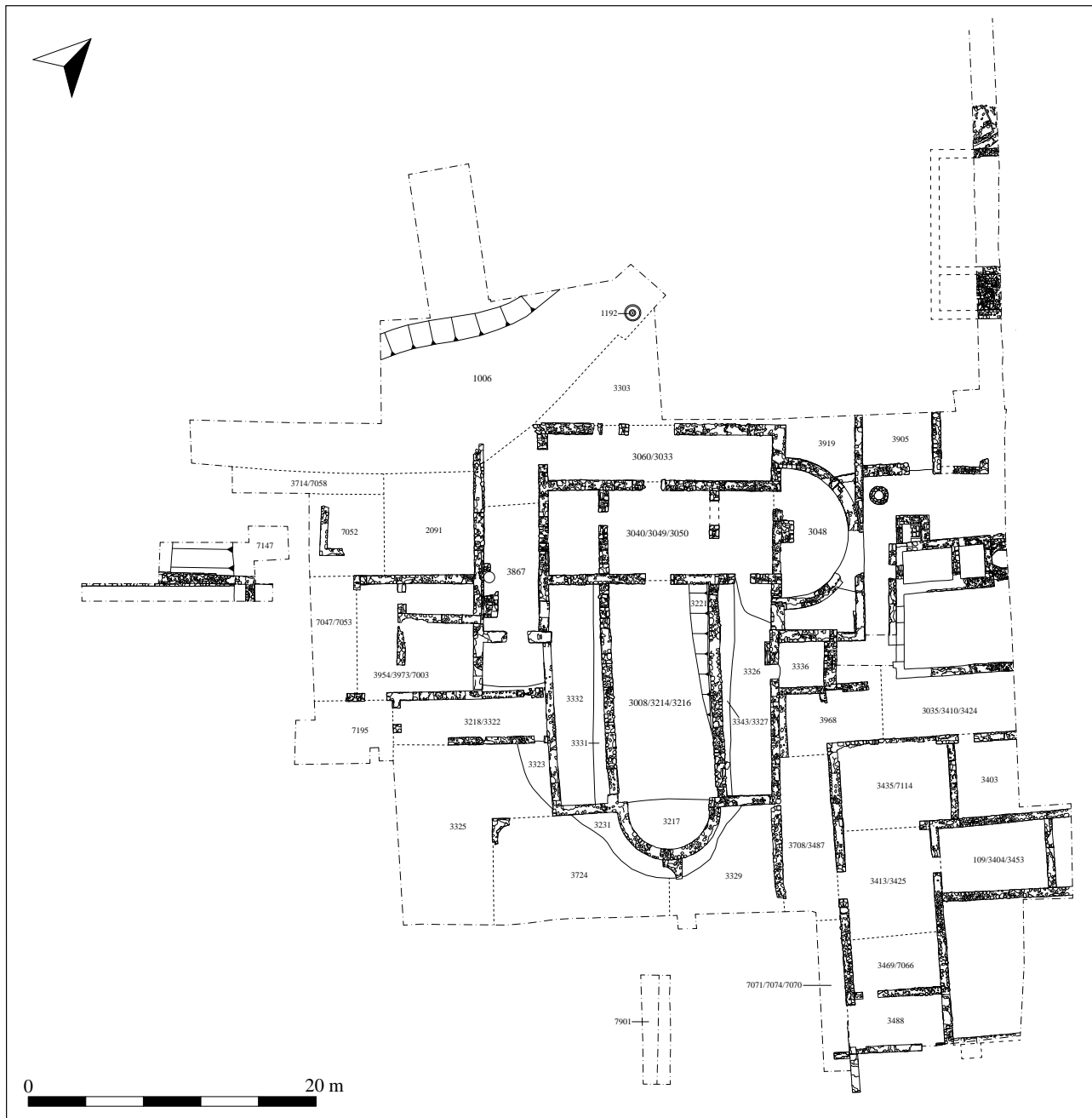


Figure 7.110. The Vrina Plain settlement showing areas of activity in Phase 14 (late 12th to 13th century)

found covering the western side (Fig. 7.118). Amongst the rubble was a broken triangular-shaped fragment of marble with two lines of inscription (SF 6034) (see Volume 6.2, Fig. 6.77). Thought to have been from the pediment of a Roman funerary monument, this block had presumably been reused in the construction of wall 3084/3298. Part of this collapse (as layer 3323) extended into the courtyard to the west of the wall, where it covered layer 3345.

Following on from these periods of collapse a series of silts built-up across the site (Fig. 7.119). In the nave a thick, dark, blackish-brown silty clay (3008/3214/3216) soon infilled the space, sealing the layers of wall collapse

along with the rough tile surface (Figs 7.120 and 7.121). To the south this layer partially covered layer 3217 and a number of large blocks (3236 and 3237) which had fallen from wall 3283 were found in it, while to the north it continued through the main door and as layer 3004/3005/3012/3040/3049/3050 extended across the whole of the former narthex. In the southeast corner, layer 3040 was found to extend through the door of the east aisle and over the northern end of the rubble spread 3326, thereby giving a relative sequence to the depositional formation of these deposits extending between the nave and aisle.

This dark silt layer was also found to extend across

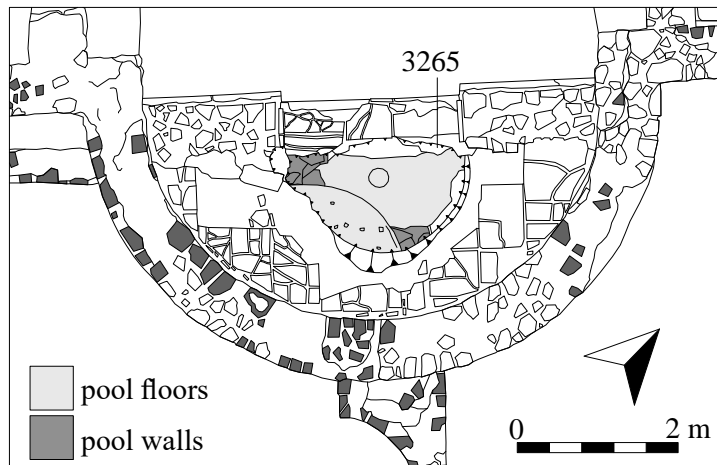


Figure 7.111. Cut 3265, thought to have been dug to remove a relic-deposit located in the apse of the former basilica. Elements of the Phase 3 pool were exposed at the base of the cut

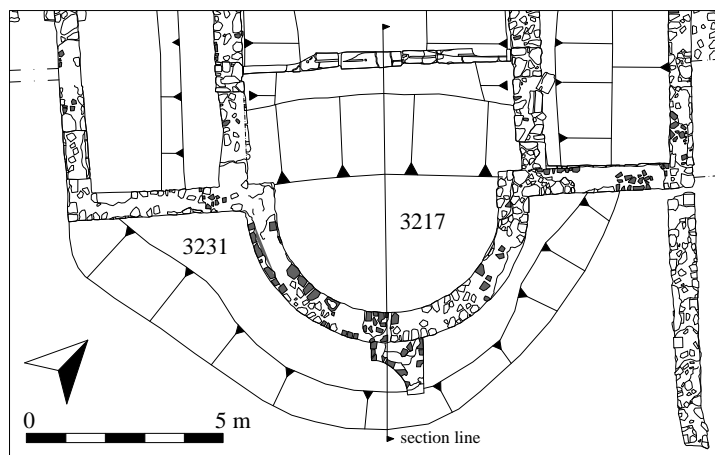


Figure 7.113. Plan of the extent of layer 3217 and 3231, material derived from the demolition of the apse of the basilica

the eastern apse where, as layer 3048, it sealed both the earlier kilns as well as wall 3129/3130 and the doorway between the apse and the narthex.⁴⁵ It continued through the northern door of the narthex and as layer 3060/3033 extend across the whole of the former exonarthex. Further north this silt layer extended through the triple doorway (in the process covering the eastern pier) and as layer 1006/3303 covered the flagstone pavement 3304 beyond as well as the remains of walls 1180 and 1165.

Layer 3033 also extended across into the northern room of the western chamber, where it sealed layer 3088. The central room of the western chamber, along with the room to the south of it, the northern part of the staircase foundation block (3081), and walls 2119/3082 and 3140 were also covered by a dark silt (3867) that seems to be associated with the formation of the other dark silts discussed above.

These deposits contained a mixed ceramic assemblage including material from the 1st, 3rd, 5th, 6th and 8th/9th centuries, as well as ceramics covering the period from the 10th to 11th century. A few layers (3344, 3216, 3049 and 3033) also contained some 11th–12th-century pieces. The coin finds covered a similarly wide age range: along with a scattering of 4th–6th-century coins, including 11 of this period from the rubble collapse 3346, a coin of Leo VI

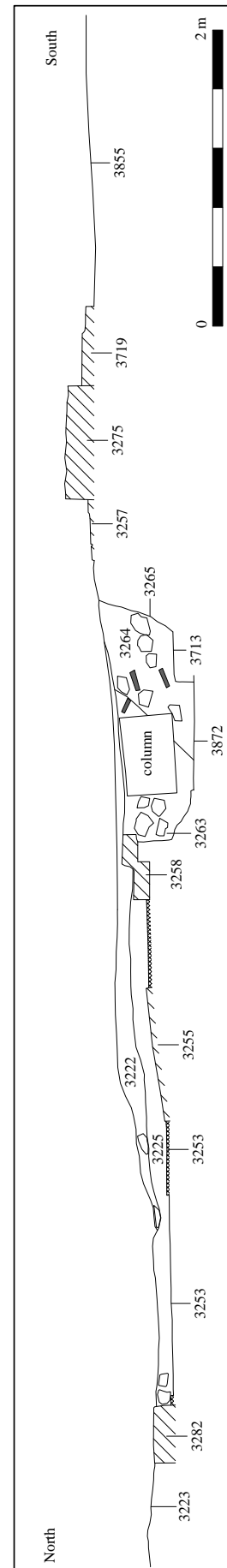


Figure 7.112. Section across the apse and sanctuary of the former basilica showing the Phase 14 feature 3265 and deposits 3264, 3263 and 3222 and the underlying Phase 13 deposit 3225 infilling the spaces

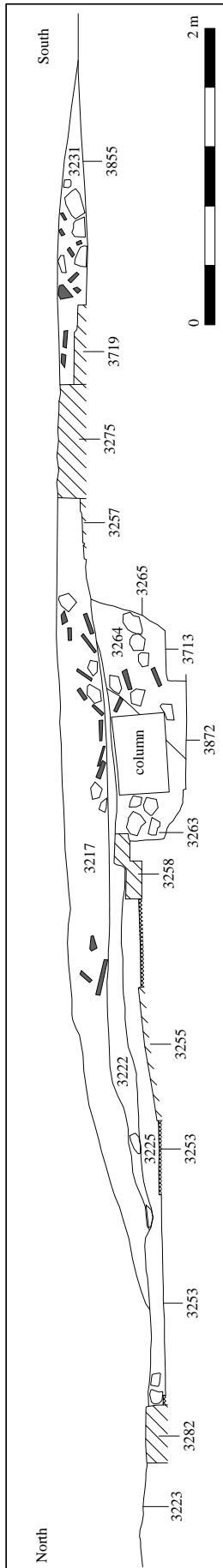


Figure 7.114. Section across the apse and sanctuary of the former basilica showing the extent of layers 3217 and 3231. See Fig. 7.113 for location

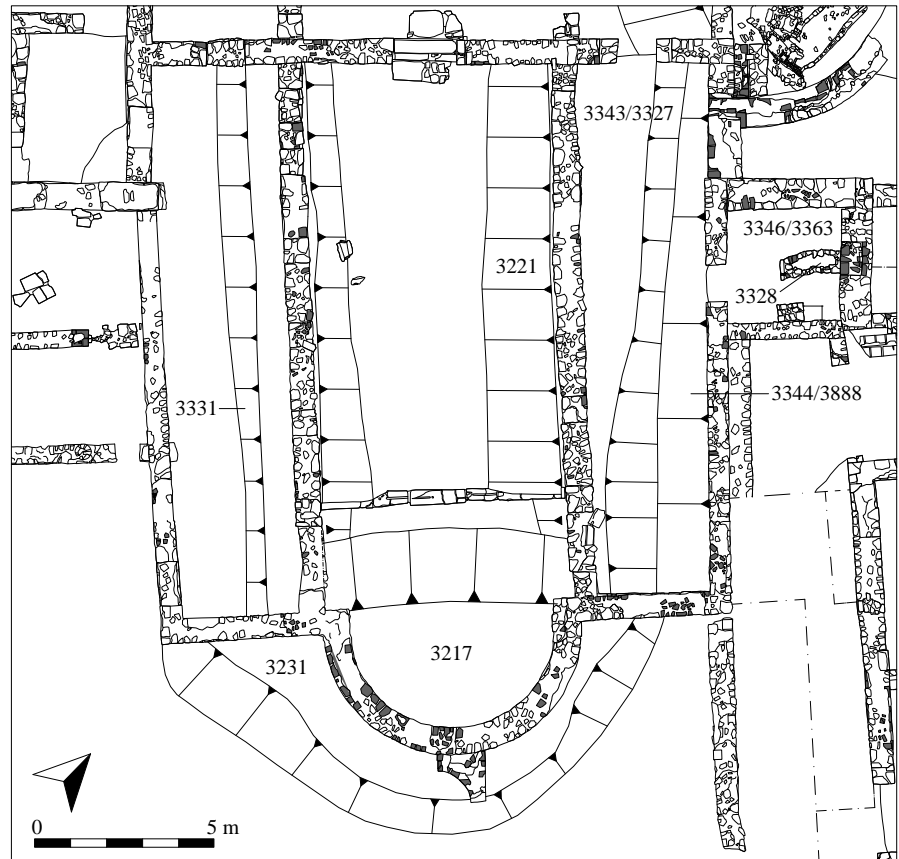


Figure 7.115. Phase 14 primary wall collapse deposits within the shell of the basilica

(AD 886–912) (SF 6050/Cat. 20) was also recovered from the blocking collapse 3331 in the west aisle. An Anonymous *folies* dating to the 10th–11th century was found in layer 3216 (SF 5050/Cat. 48) and six coins of 10th–11th-century date were found in layer 3033 (SFs 3403/Cat. 34, 3412/Cat. 30, 3464/Cat. 35, 3465/Cat. 30, 3466/Cat. 14 and 3477/Cat. 36). A further coin of Leo VI was retrieved from layer 3303 (SF 5059/Cat. 18).

A number of personal items, presumably lost or discarded from the last use of the ruins, were also found in these deposits. These included a thimble (3049, SF 3461), a copper alloy penannular brooch (3060, SF 3469), an iron knife (3060, SF 3476), a copper alloy ring (3033, SF 3405), a ceramic lamp (3033, SF 3409), a copper alloy ear scoop (3033, SF 3478), an iron key (3033, SF 3483), and a possible iron arrowhead (3033, SF 3484).

Pieces of metal slag were found within layers 3048 and 3060, suggesting one of the kilns within the apse, possibly kiln 3111, was used for smelting. Some 38 iron nails were found scattered throughout layers 3060 (23 nails) and 3033 (15 nails).

The eastern area

The complex of buildings around the main house also began to deteriorate from this period onwards (see Fig. 7.110). The building in the northeast corner defined by walls 106 and 107 was demolished and a light-brown clay silt (3905) containing a large amount of mortar from the surrounding walls soon accumulated across the floor of the room. The northern extent of wall 42 was also removed at this time. To the west, wall 3935 was demolished, probably at the same time as walls 106 and 107. A dark-grey silt (3919), containing medieval ceramics, then built up over the area, sealing the line of the demolished wall.

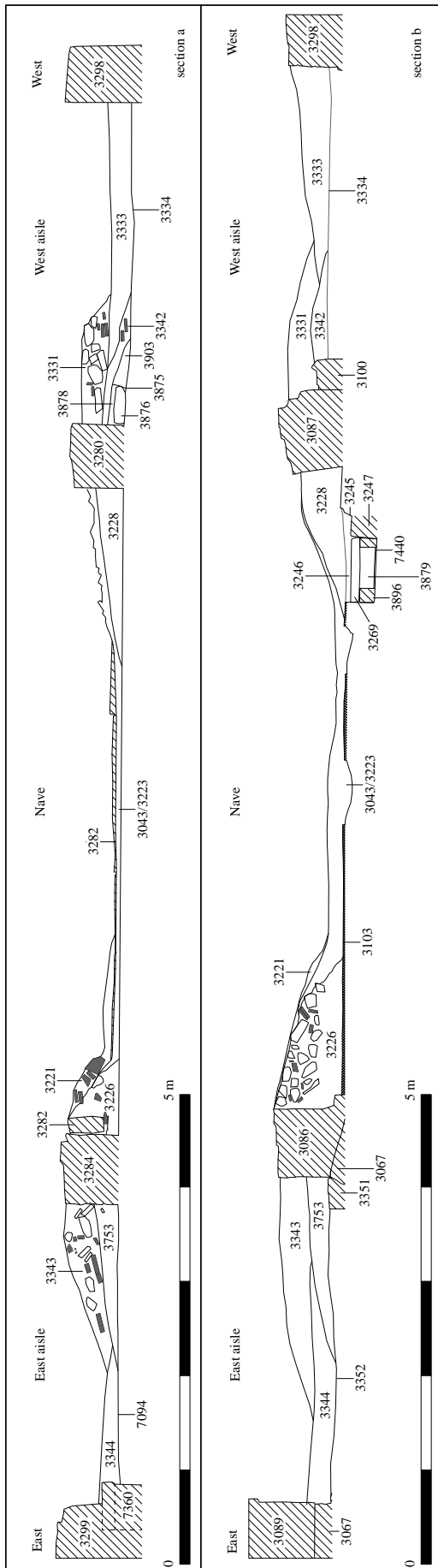


Figure 7.116. Sections across the aisles and nave showing the extent of layers 3344, 3331, 3343/3327 and 3221. See Fig. 7.86 for location

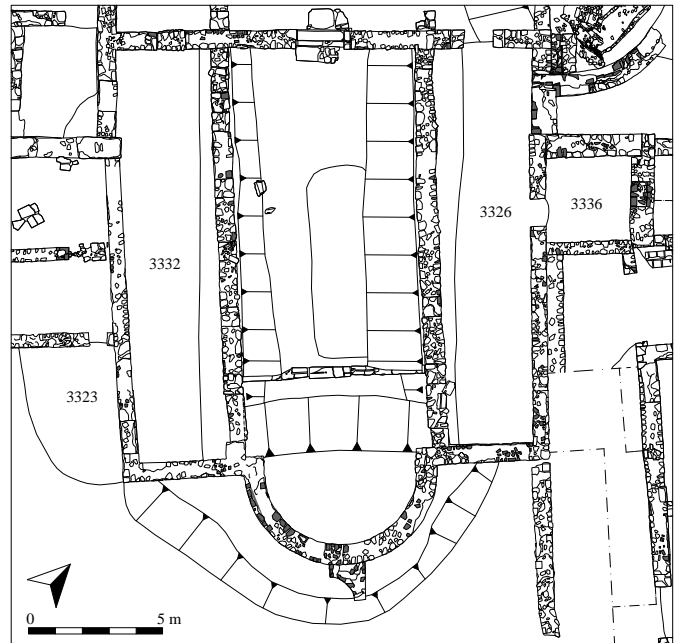


Figure 7.117. Phase 14 secondary wall collapse deposits within the shell of the basilica

The east entrance, east portico and east wing

The rooms fronting the road began to collapse and a dark greyish-brown silt containing large amounts of rubble from these walls soon began to accumulate over the road (3035/3410/3424) (Fig. 7.122). This layer (as 3968) extended into the former entrance vestibule, where it partially covered wall 3980, as well as the northern end of the former east portico (Fig. 7.123). Along with a number of 5th–6th-century fragments, layer 3968 also contained 17 medieval sherds. Of these, 16 have been dated to the early medieval period and it may be that this material indicates some form of activity or repair to these buildings that has otherwise left no archaeological evidence. Two coins were recovered from these layers: a coin of Leo VI (AD 886–912) (SF 3401/Cat. 8) from layer 3035, and a coin of Basil I (AD 867–86) (SF 5103/Cat. 6) from layer 3424.

At the southern end of the former east portico a number of large intact blocks of masonry, one of which was over 2 m in length, were found (7083) (Fig. 7.124). From their construction, it seems these blocks had fallen from wall 3500. A dark greyish-brown silt, matching that seen over the road and again containing further rubble, this time fallen from the western walls, had then built up over these blocks (7071/7074/7070) and (as layer 3708/3487) spread to the north. Again, this layer contained a similar range of ceramics, including three possible early medieval pieces, some fragments of Otranto 1 amphora, some 11th–12th-century fragments and a sherd (from layer 7071) dated to the 13th century. Layer 3708 also contained a coin of Leo VI (AD 886–912) (SF 6104/Cat. 23). Part of a silver-plated iron horse bit (SF 6073), thought to date to the late 8th century, was also recovered from this layer (see Volume 6.2, Fig. 6.46 and Plate 6.6), while a bone spindle whorl (SF 6361) and a copper alloy ring (SF 6362) were found in layer 7070.

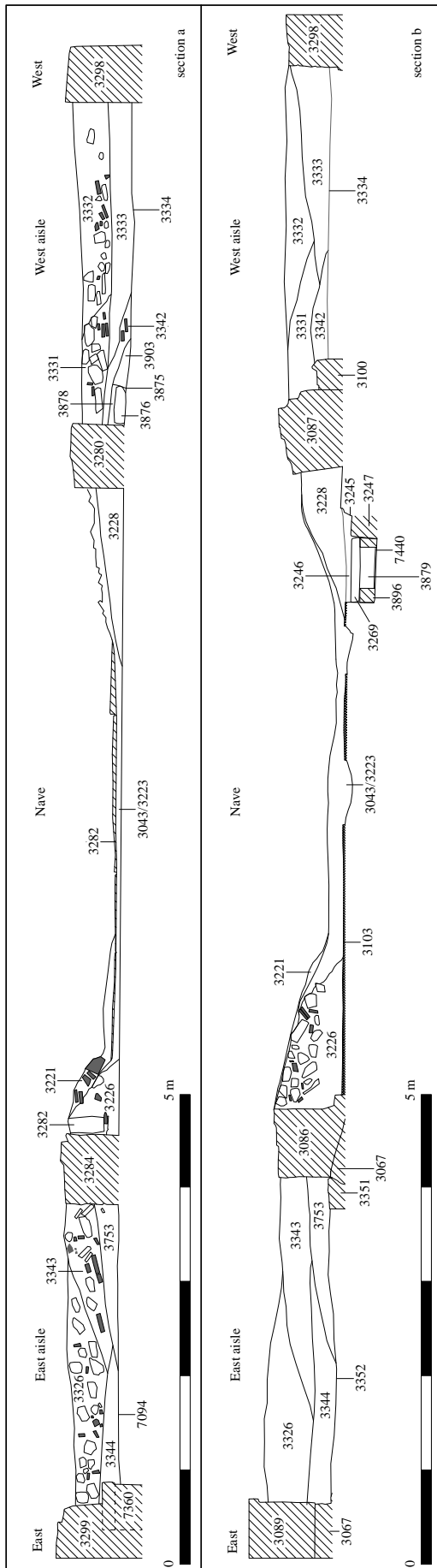


Figure 7.118. Sections across the aisles and nave showing the extent of layers 3326 and 3332. See Fig. 7.86 for location

A similar mix of dark greyish-brown silt and rubble was found infilling the various rooms of the east wing. In Room 1 this was represented by layer 3403, in Room 2 by layer 3435/7114, in Room 3 by layer 3413/3425, in Room 4 by layer 3469/7066 in the northern room and layer 3488 in the southern room, and in Room 5 by layer 109/3404/3453. Again, much of the rubble derived from the collapse of the walls of the rooms. Although the walls had largely broken up when they fell, in some rooms the fallen masonry did show signs of surviving coursing, indicating which walls had collapsed into which rooms. In Room 2 the vertical positioning of the stones across the southern half of the room suggested this material had partly fallen from the dividing wall between Rooms 2 and 3 (wall 3569) (Fig. 7.125), while three sections of brickwork defining a possible door from an upper storey, found across the eastern side of the room, seem to have fallen from wall 151 (Fig. 7.126). In Room 3 part of the southern side of the door surround, from the door leading to Room 5, was located amongst a mass of masonry that had collapsed from wall 3419 (Fig. 7.127).

The layers over Rooms 2, 3 and the northern room of Room 4 sealed the line of the division walls between the respective rooms. At the point where they merged there was no distinction between the layers, indicating these deposits had built up simultaneously and were part of the same episode. The layers found in the two rooms of Room 4 also ran through the doorway between the rooms without any obvious change in composition. The southern layer 3488 extended through the door to the former portico and merged with layer 7071/7074/7070 beyond. Similarly, layer 3413 in Room 3 and layer 109/3404/3453 in Room 5 merged through the doorway between the two without any difference, while layer 3413 merged with layer 3708/3487 through the doorway between Room 2 and the former portico beyond.

Once more the ceramic assemblage from these layers contained a mix of Roman and medieval pieces. Amongst the latter were nine early medieval fragments from layer 3469 dating to either the 7th/8th century or the 8th/9th century. Layer 3488, which as noted above is thought to be a continuation of layer 3469, also contained a similar datable piece. It also contained 30 fragments of ceramics dated to the 10th–11th and 11th–12th century, as well as three intrusive pieces from the late medieval period (13th–14th century). As with layer 3968, the discovery of the early medieval period finds may imply some form of repair was carried out to these eastern buildings during this period which otherwise left no trace in the archaeological record. The coin finds from these layers cover a similar date range, with the latest being a Billion Trachy of Manuel Comnenus I (AD 1143–80) (SF 6559/Cat. 52) from layer 3488.

The courtyard

Along with the build-up of deposits within the eastern buildings following the abandonment of the site, the area

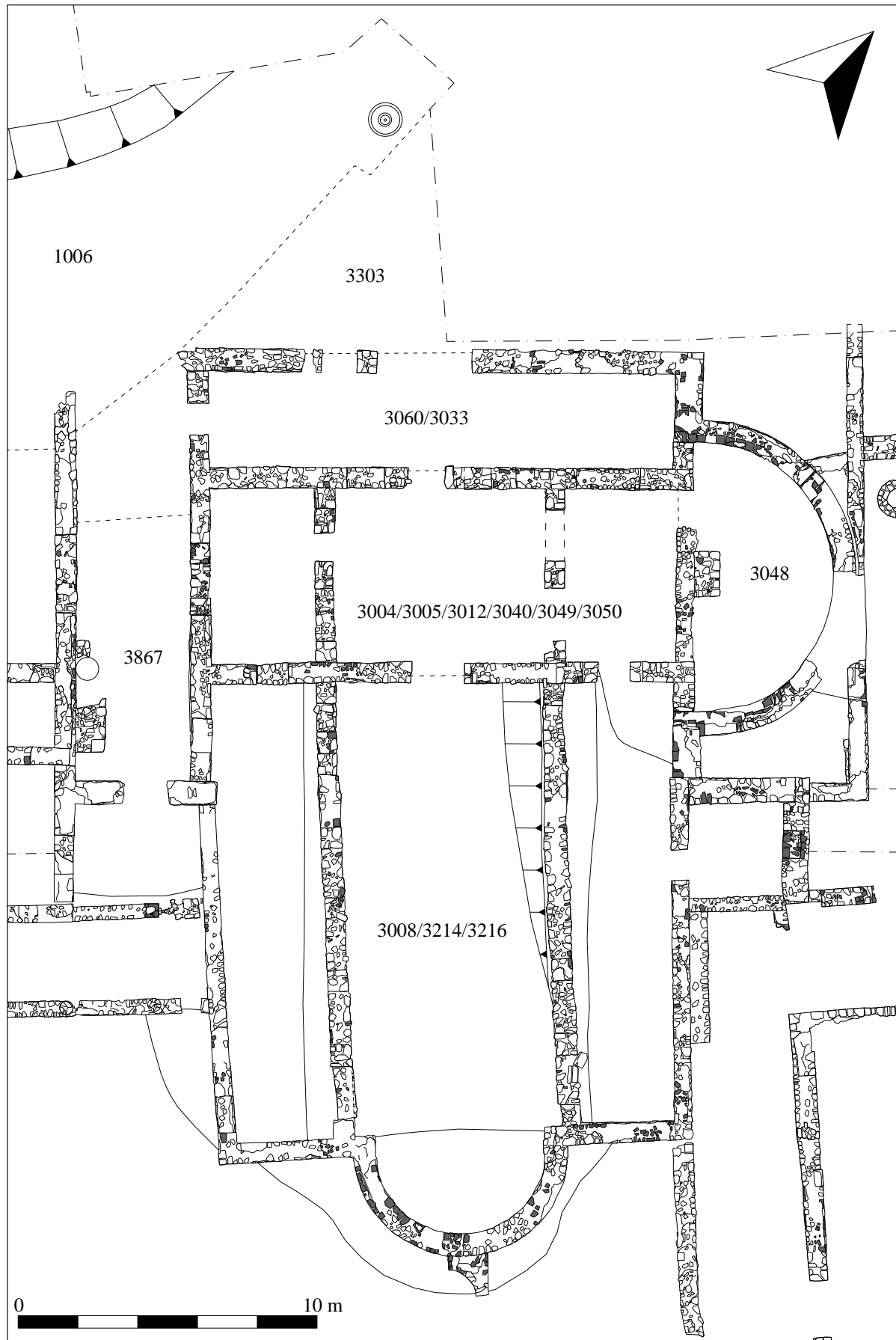


Figure 7.119. Plan of the silt deposits across the basilica and Phase 11 house following the period of wall collapse



Figure 7.120. View of the basilica, looking north, showing the various Phase 14 deposits infilling the structure, during excavation

of the former courtyard also began to see the accumulation of a 'black earth' deposit (Fig. 7.128). Across the eastern side of the courtyard this deposit was recorded as 3329, a very dark greyish-brown silty clay 0.40 m thick which contained frequent fragments of broken tile, limestone fragments and mortar flecks. To the east this layer extended over the line of the former east portico and merged with layer 3708/3487, while to the west it covered the southeastern edge of layer 3231. To the west of this, the layer was excavated as layer 3325/3724 (Fig. 7.129). This layer sloped slightly from east to west and covered the rest of the inner pool apart from a small area at its northwest corner, which could still be seen through it, as well as the western edge of layer 3323 and the southwestern edge of layer 3231. As layer 3218/3322/7195 it extended across both the north and west porticoes. A similar dark, greyish-brown silty clay deposit (7901), again containing occasional fragments of limestone and tile, also covered the area of the former south portico.

This post-abandonment deposit contained a mixed ceramic assemblage with material from the 2nd, 3rd, 5th and 6th centuries as well as a few fragments dating to the 8th–9th century, including two amphora fragments and a rim of a Glazed White Ware I chalice or lamp from layer 3322 (see Volume 6.2, Chapter 1 Fig. 1.1 and Plate 1.2). The stem of this chalice or lamp was found mixed in with the midden deposit 3333 in the west aisle (see above). The deposit also contained a large amount of 10th–11th-century ceramics, along with some later pieces including a handle of a Glazed White Ware II vessel dating approximately to the 11th–12th century (from layer 3325). A number of late 12th–early 13th-century imported fine wares from the Aegean (from layers 3322 and 3325) were also recovered, along with a rim-handle fragment from a locally produced cooking pot (from layer 3218) that is dated on stylistic grounds to a similar period (see Volume 6.2, Chapter 1 Fig. 1.10). The coin finds cover a similar date range and include a number of 4th–6th-century examples, along with two mid-9th-century denominations of Michael III (AD 842–67)

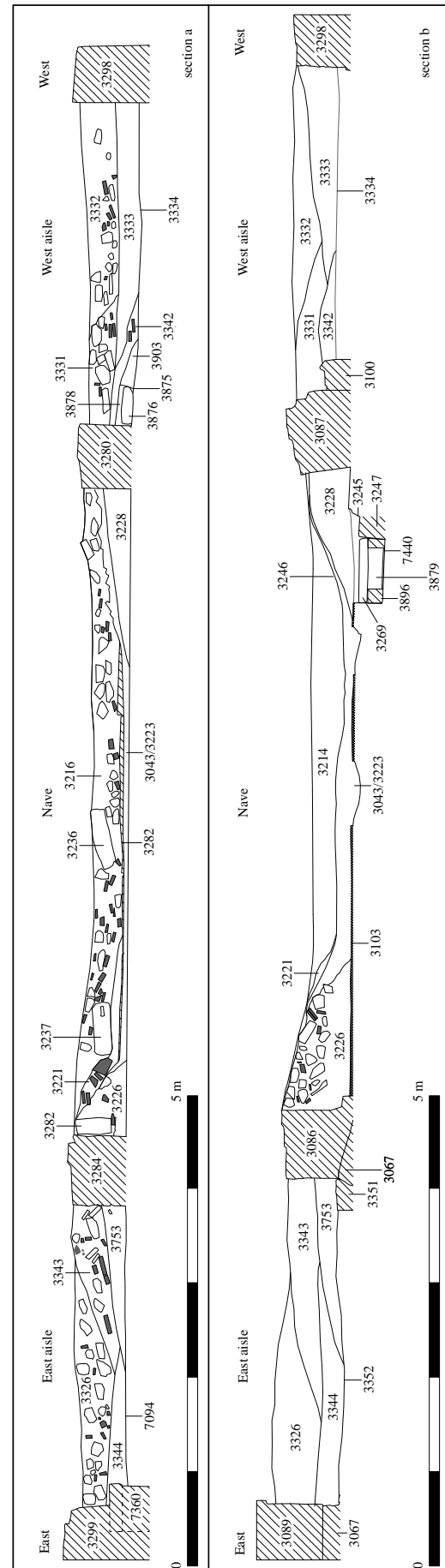


Figure 7.121. Sections across the aisles and nave showing the extent of layer 3216/3214. See Fig. 7.86 for location

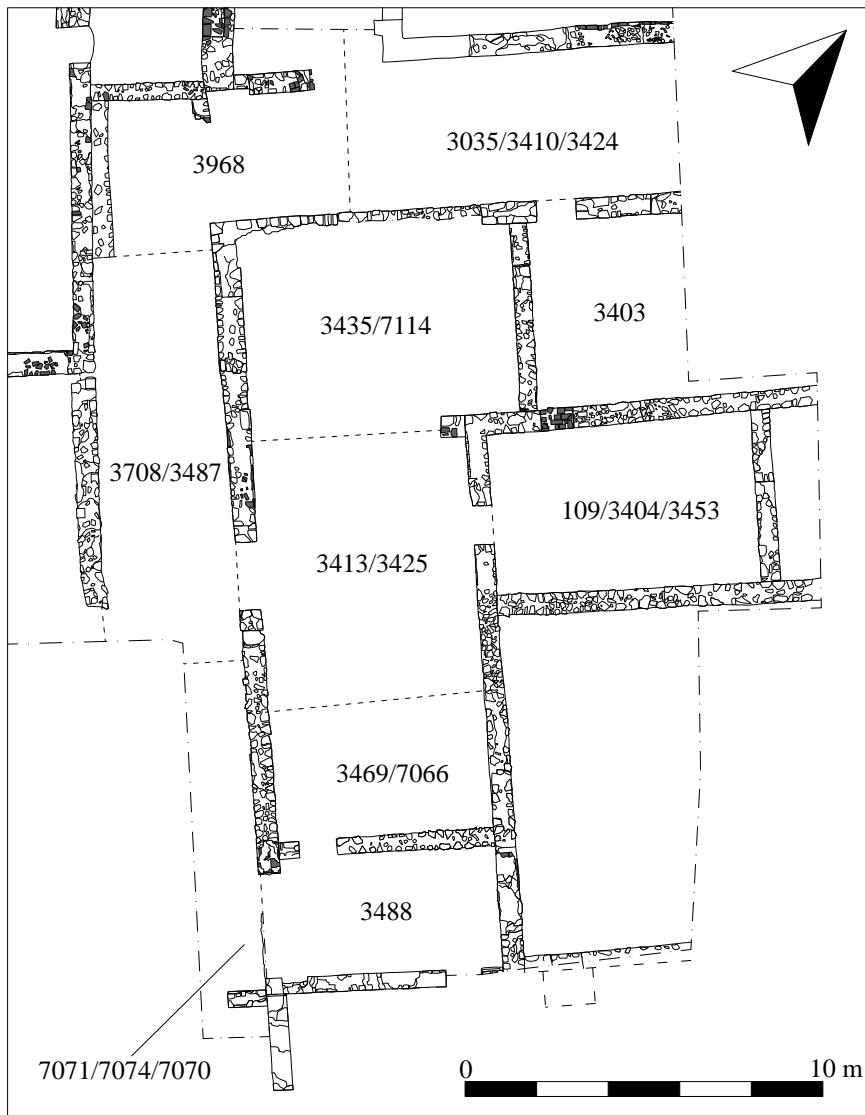


Figure 7.122. The former road, east portico and east wing of the domus in Phase 14

(SF 6012/Cat. 3 Context 3322; SF 6032/Cat. 4 Context 3325) and various ones of 10th-century date. Among the latest was a further Billion Trachy of Manuel Comnenus I (AD 1143–80) from layer 7195 (SF 6396/Cat. 54) and either a Billion Trachy of Alexius III (AD 1195–1203) or a Bulgarian Imitative from layer 3325 (SF 6037/Cat. 55). Layer 3218 also contained a 16th–17th-century Venetian coin (SF 5017/Cat. 58), while the 10th-century lead seal thought to be of Peter (SF 6030) was found within layer 3325.

These deposits also contained animal bone and glass, as well as a number of smaller items including a copper alloy fibula (3218, SF 5046), a ceramic loom weight (3322, SF 6035), a copper alloy handle (3325, SF 6023), a copper alloy earring (3325, SF 6027), a copper alloy spindle-hook (3325, SF 6029), part of an iron key (3325, SF 6241), a dagger-shaped shank, probably from a radiate-headed brooch (3724, SF 6097) and a decorative copper alloy object depicting a crescent moon (3724, SF 6123) (see Volume 6.2, Fig. 6.20 and Plate 6.5).⁴⁶

The western marine entrance and northwest buildings

As well as covering the courtyard, this dark, greyish-brown silty clay post-abandonment deposit also extended across the northwest corner of the area

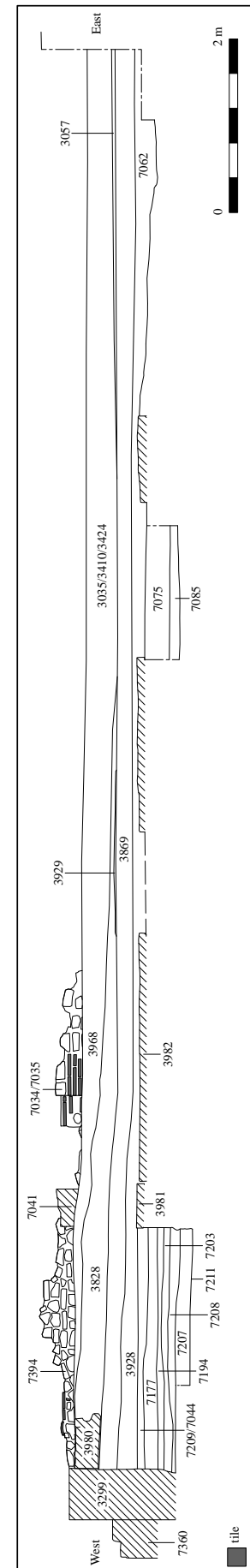


Figure 7.123. South-facing section through the former eastern entrance of the domus showing the Phase 14 layer 3035/3410/3424/3968

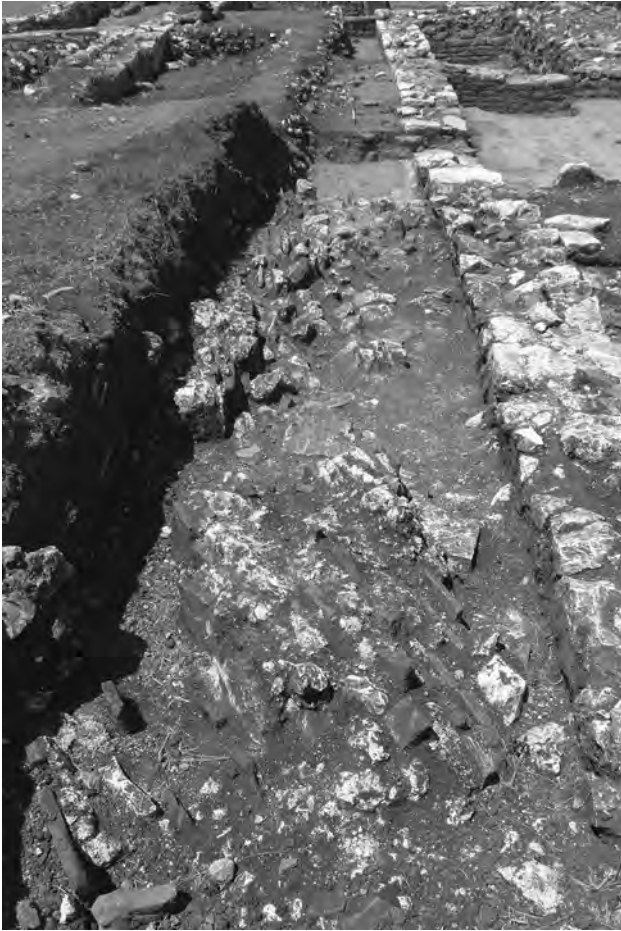


Figure 7.124. Masonry 7083 fallen from wall 3500 at the southern end of the former east portico

(Fig. 7.130). Excavated as layer 2091/3954/3973/7047/7053/3714/7052/7058/7147, this deposit banked up against the western face of wall 2109 and virtually sealed all the walls located to the west of this.

This same post-abandonment deposit was also picked up in the initial drainage ditch excavations. Excavated as 1006, this layer extended along the whole length of the trench (c. 37 m) and again sealed all the walls within the trial excavation including the northwest corner of the western chamber. As with the western deposits, layer 1006 wrapped around the northern side of the ruins and by the main doorway into the building it can be equated to layer 3033 (see above). Along its northern edge layer 1006 tipped slightly towards the edge of the shore line, which by now is thought to have shifted slightly towards the ruins.

Once more these deposits contained a mixed ceramic assemblage covering both the Roman and medieval periods. The coin finds, however, were limited to denominations covering the 4th–6th centuries only. These layers also contained numerous animal bone and glass fragments, including several glass cakes from layer 3954 (SF 6249), a broken quern stone from layer 7052 (SF 6316), and two lead strips from layers 3714 (SF 6082) and 3954 (SF

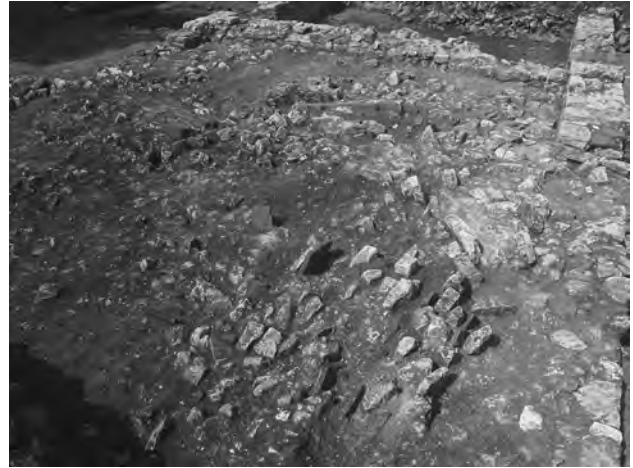


Figure 7.125. Fallen masonry along the southern side of Room 2. The vertical positioning of the stones suggest it fell from wall 3569, the division wall between Rooms 2 and 3



Figure 7.126. Masonry fallen from wall 151 along the eastern side of Room 2. The three sections of brickwork are thought to define a doorway from an upper storey (2 × 2 m scale)

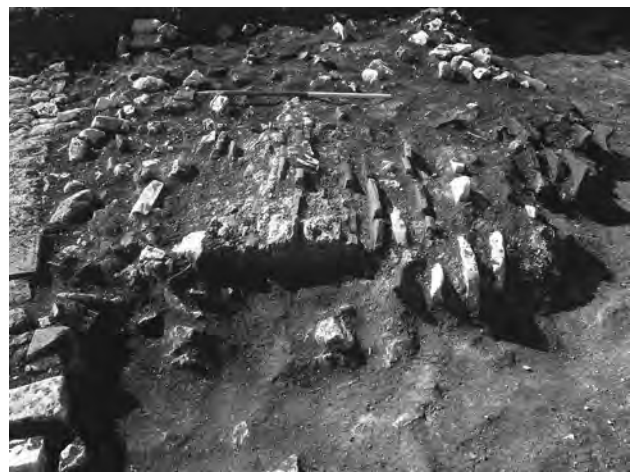


Figure 7.127. Southern side of the door between Rooms 3 and 5 fallen into Room 3 (1 m scale)

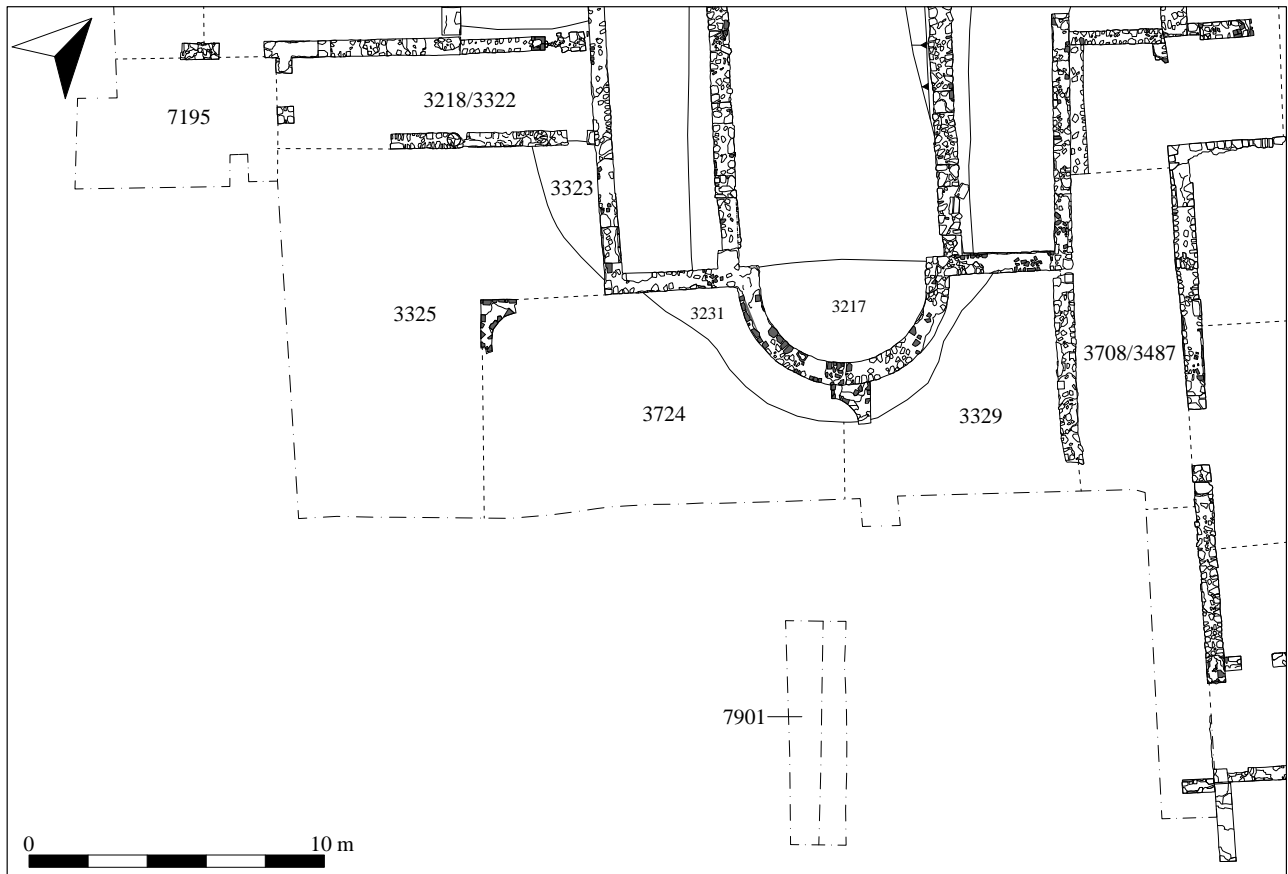


Figure 7.128. The Phase 14 'black earth' deposits across the former courtyard and north and west porticoes

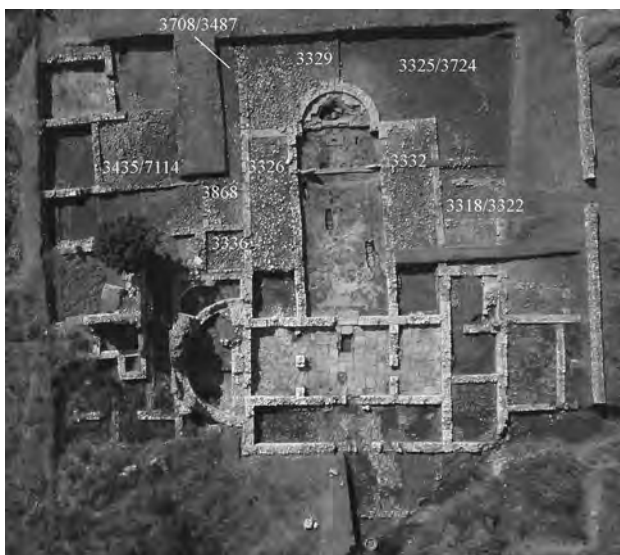


Figure 7.129. Aerial view of the complex showing the Phase 14 soils across the site at the end of the 2005 excavations

6273).⁴⁷ A lamp found in layer 1006 (SF 2368) seems to be water-worn, suggesting this layer was partially waterlogged at periods, probably due to the rise and fall of the Vivari Channel. This layer also contained a small Corinthian capital of white marble (SF 2366) that is thought to have

come from the basilica (Fig. 7.131).⁴⁸ An olive millstone (1192), located at the eastern end of the trial excavation, is thought to come from the same layer (Fig. 7.132). This large, heavy object was almost certainly removed from a building close by and the fact that it was found in this abandonment layer would seem to suggest that despite the desertion of the site, people still occasionally visited the ruins in order to source materials for some time after the main occupation ended.

The Southern Buildings

A similar dark greyish-brown layer (7801/7802) (0.20 m thick) built up over the eastern of the two trenches dug to the south of the main buildings from this period onwards (Fig. 7.133). Again frequent limestone rubble and tile fragments were dispersed throughout the layer, along with glass and various worn and abraded redeposited Roman ceramics. It also contained a corroded 10th-century *folles* from Constantinople (SF 6300). Underlying layer 7801/7802 was a mid-greenish-brown clay silt (7803) which had developed across this area of the site in the intervening period following the abandonment of the Vrina Plain complex from the second half of the 6th century onwards. This depositional sequence was also seen in the western trench. A mid-greenish-brown silty clay (7706) (0.22 m thick) sealed the Phase 7 agricultural trenches. This in

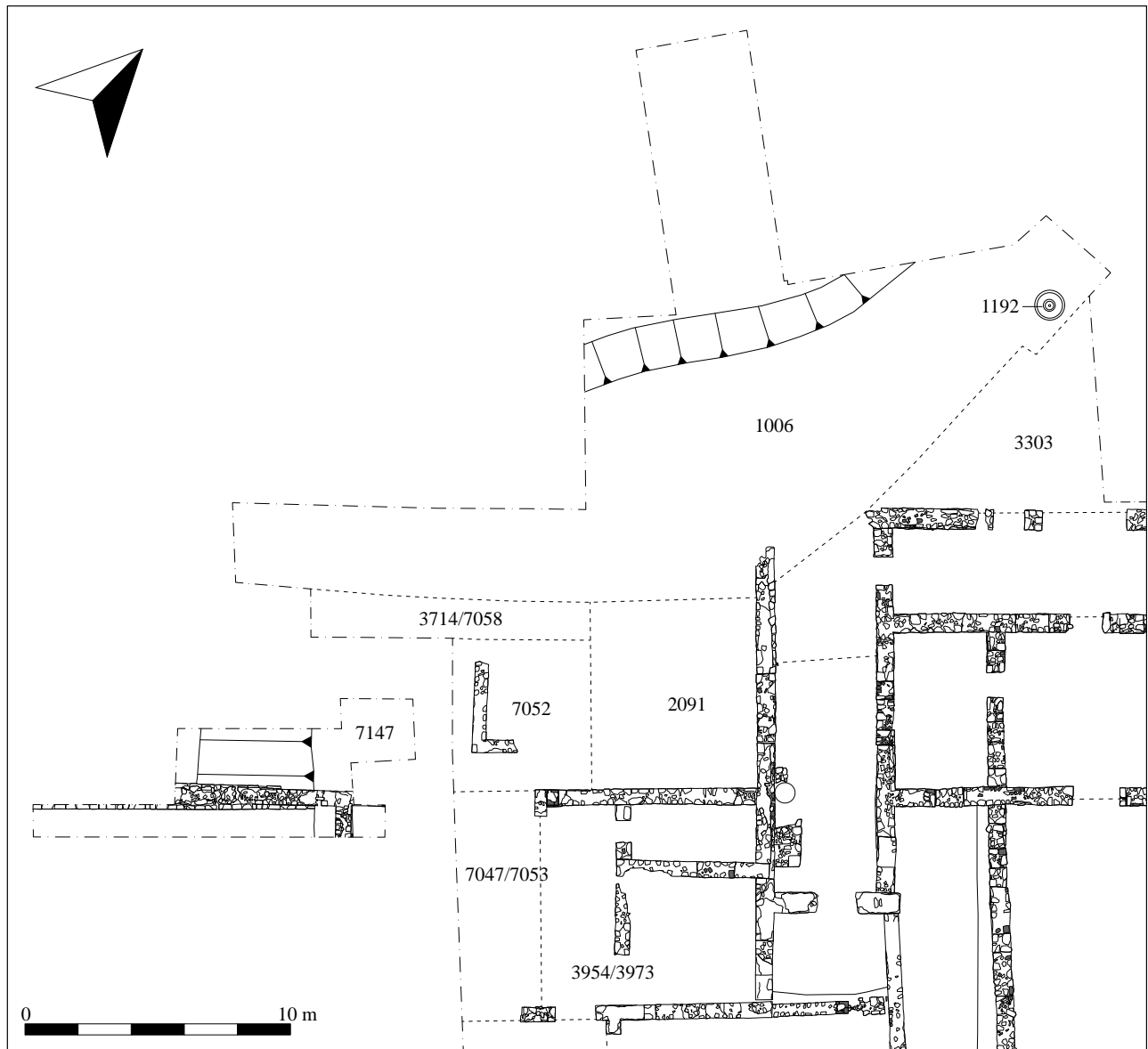


Figure 7.130. The western marine entrance and the northwest buildings in Phase 14

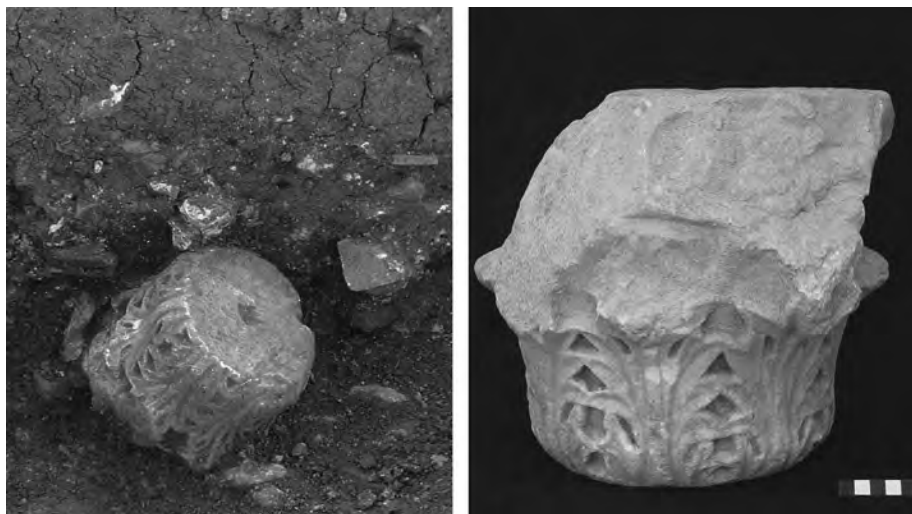


Figure 7.131. Corinthian capital SF 2366 during excavation and after conservation (5 cm scale)



Figure 7.132. Olive millstone 1192

turn was sealed by a dark greyish-brown clay (7701) (0.20 m thick). Mixed throughout this upper layer were a number of pieces of burnt marble and fused tile. As with Phase 7, these pieces suggest some form of industrial activity was again taking place nearby.

Summary/Interpretation

By the end of the 12th century the industrial and devotional use of the ruins appears to have ended. A fire in the southern apse may have partially caused this abandonment, while the persistent problems of rising ground water may have made occupation virtually impossible. Seismic activity may also have played a part as it has been suggested that Butrint was the epicentre of an earthquake in 1153.⁴⁹

Following the collapse of various buildings, a 'black earth' built up over the remains. This post-abandonment deposit, varying in depth from c. 0.20 m to 0.35 m, contained a mixed ceramic assemblage including early, mid- and late Roman material, as well as ceramics covering the period from the 9th to 13th century. The coin finds have a similar range;

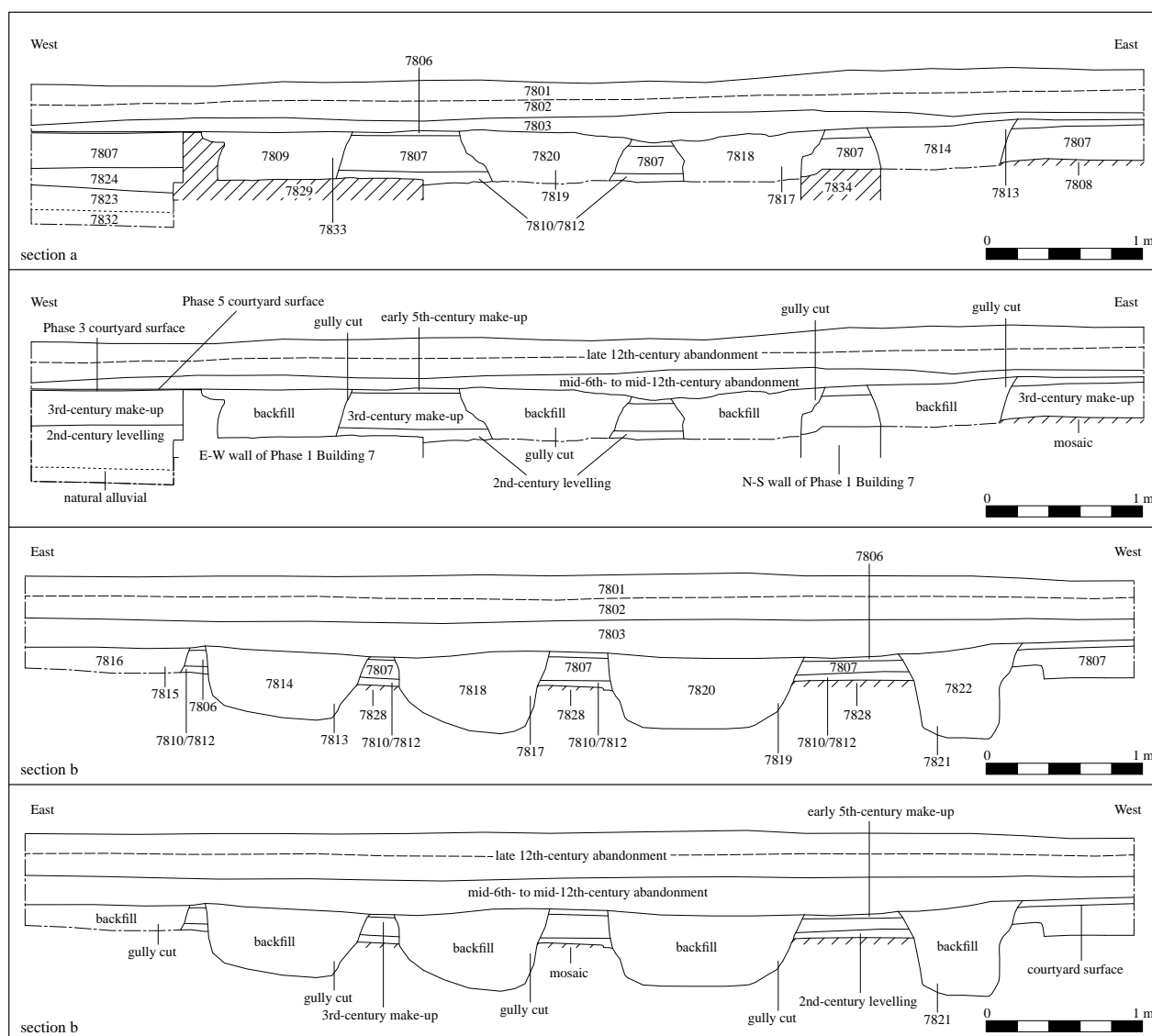


Figure 7.133. Sections showing the Phase 14 deposit 7801/7802 across the former southern courtyard

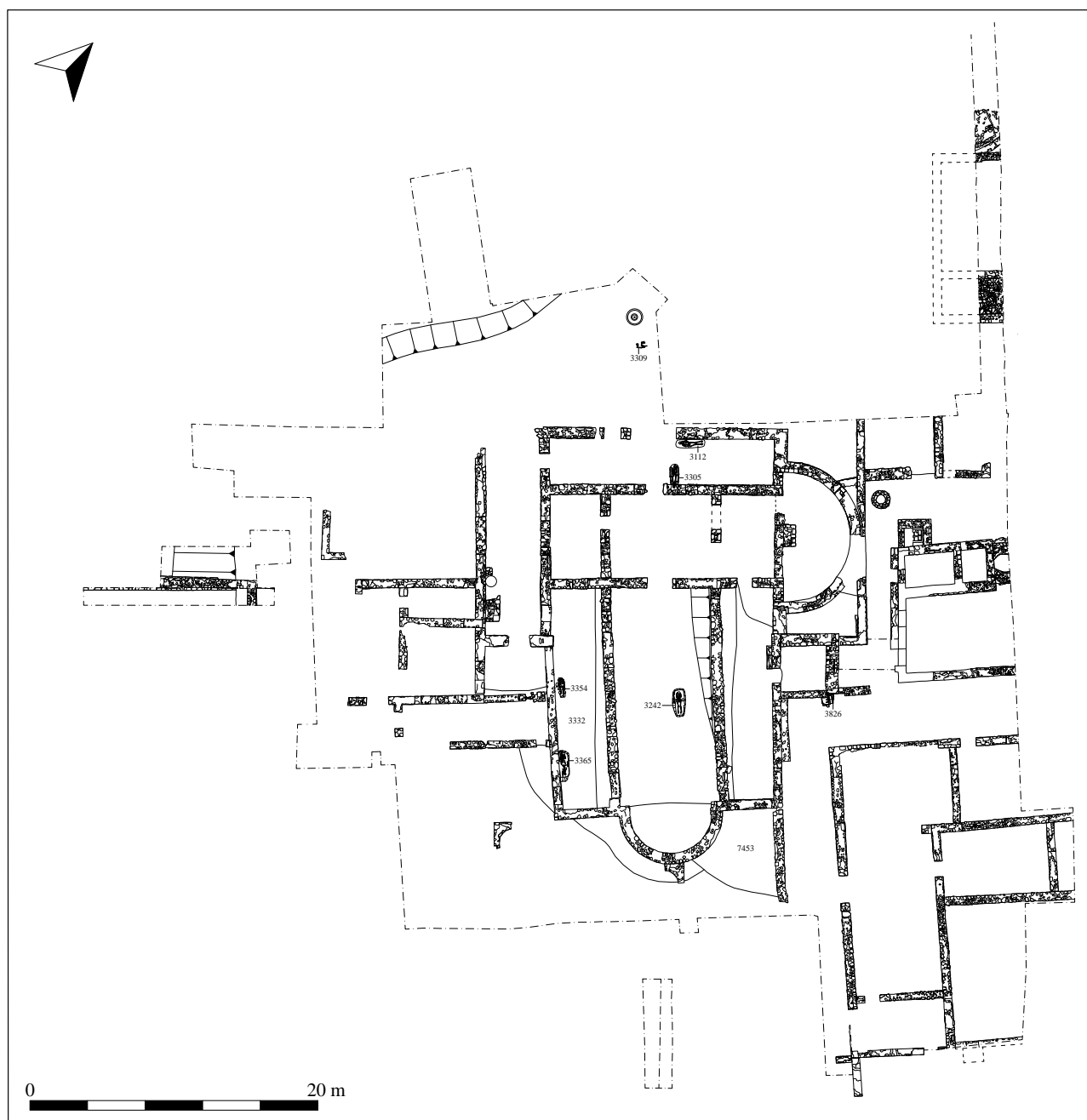


Figure 7.134. The Vrina Plain settlement showing areas of activity in Phase 15 (13th century)

among the latest examples were two of Manuel Comnenus I (AD 1143–80).

Phase 15: 13th century – burials and rock piles

Despite much of the building being covered over, the knowledge and sanctity of the site seems to have remained as a number of later burials were found cut through the upper demolition layers of the basilica. A rock pile, deliberately collected up and dumped over the soils just to the south of the southern wall of the eastern aisle, also indicates activity on the site (Fig. 7.134).

Burials

Within the ruins at least five burials have been revealed cut through the demolition layers described above. Two of these were located in the former western aisle, two in the former exonarthex, and one in the former nave. A sixth burial was located just outside the ruins to the north, while a seventh, possibly contemporary, burial was identified cutting the deposits infilling the former eastern entrance of the *domus*.

In the west aisle both graves were cut through layer 3332 (Fig. 7.135). Grave 3365 was a rectangular cut (1.80×0.65 m) located towards the southern end of the west aisle. Orientated north–south, the grave had been dug up against the western wall of the room and contained the body of a

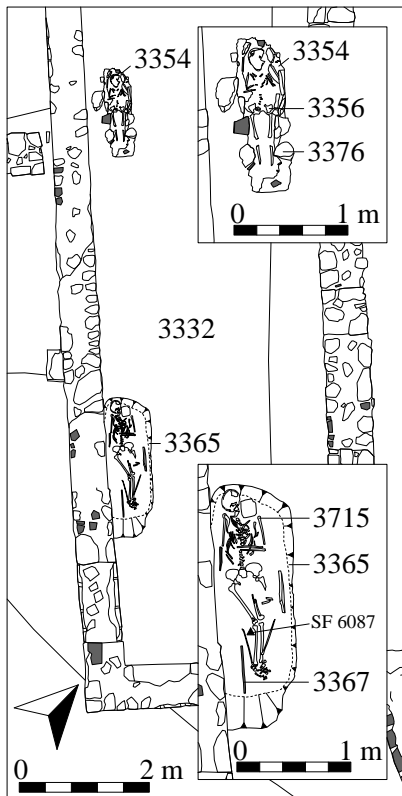


Figure 7.135. Phase 15 graves in the former west aisle



Figure 7.136. Grave 3365 (1 m scale)

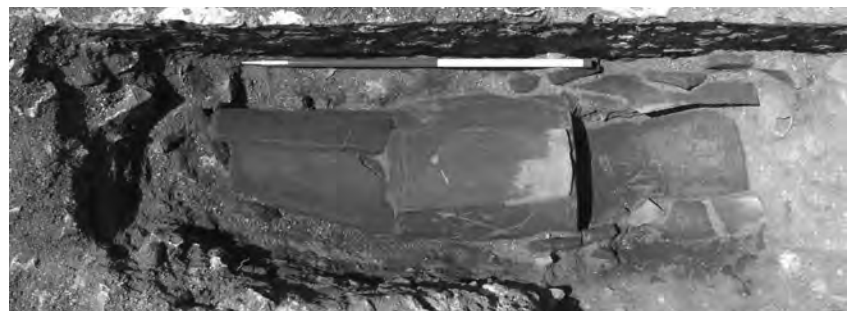


Figure 7.137. Grave capping 3367 (1 m scale)

young adult male, aged 25–30 years old (Fig. 7.136). The body (3715) had been placed in a supine position with the head to the north, the right arm placed over the pelvis and the left arm laid across the chest. The legs were slightly bent with the feet together. A small piece of iron (SF 6087) was found by the left leg. A series of large tile *imbrices* ($0.60 \times 0.30 \times 0.03$ m), some with hand/comb swipes on them, covered the body (3367) (Fig. 7.137). These were covered by a mid-greyish-brown silty clay (3368) which in time had filtered through the tiles and (as 3366) covered the body beneath.

The second burial within the aisle, this time of a child aged 4–5 years old, was located 3.80 m to the north of 3365 (Fig. 7.138). This rectangular grave (3354) (1.40×0.48 m), orientated north–south, again appeared to have been aligned with the outer western wall of the aisle, which presumably was still visible. A series of limestone and tile fragments (3376) placed around the sides of the cut formed a rough lining. The body (3356) had been laid in a supine position, with the head to the north, the arms placed over the chest and the legs extended. A piece of iron (SF 6063) was found by the left foot. Two *imbrices* (3357), again with hand-swipe decoration on them, covered the body (Fig. 7.139). These in turn were covered by a dark greyish-brown silty clay (3355). At the time of death this child was suffering from scurvy (see Volume 6.2, Chapter 5).

In the exonarthex, the two burials were located at right angles to each other (Fig. 7.140). Grave 3112 was

orientated east–west and had been inserted adjacent to the outer wall of the room, which presumably was still visible (Fig. 7.141).⁵⁰ The individual within the grave (3114), a middle-aged adult male aged 30–40 years, had been buried in a supine position with his head to the west, hands placed over the pelvis and legs extended. Much of the skull had been damaged, possibly due to later cultivation activity (see below). To the south of this burial was grave 3305, a stone-lined inhumation containing the body of an adult male (3308) of similar age (Fig. 7.142). Orientated north–south, the southern end of the grave had been partially cut through the northern side of the blocking wall 7426. Three large limestone slabs (3307), placed on edge, lined either side of the grave.⁵¹ The body (3308) fitted snugly inside the lining and had been laid in a supine position, with the head to the north and the arms folded across the chest. The legs were extended with the feet probably placed flat against the end of the grave. Infilling the grave was a dark greyish-brown silty clay (3306).

Pathological study of these two individuals seems to suggest they both suffered from periostitis, possibly brought on by excessive physical activity, as well as arthritis. Skeleton 3114 showed signs that the individual had also suffered from brucellosis (see Volume 6.2, Chapter 5 for more details).

In the nave, grave 3242 was located centrally along the eastern side of the room (Fig. 7.143). This rectangular grave

(1.75 × 0.67 m) was orientated north–south and contained the body of a young adult female, aged 25–35 years old. The base of the grave had been cut through the mosaic pavement 3103 (Fig. 7.144) as well as the underlying mortar



Figure 7.138. Grave 3354

and make-up layers 3312 and 3248 and in the process had exposed the line of the back wall of the north portico (7393) of the Phase 3 *domus*; this could be seen running across the base of the grave. The body (3244) had been laid in a supine position over this wall, with the head at the northern end of the grave. The right arm had been placed by the side of the body with the hand over the pelvis while the



Figure 7.139. Grave capping 3357 (1 m scale)

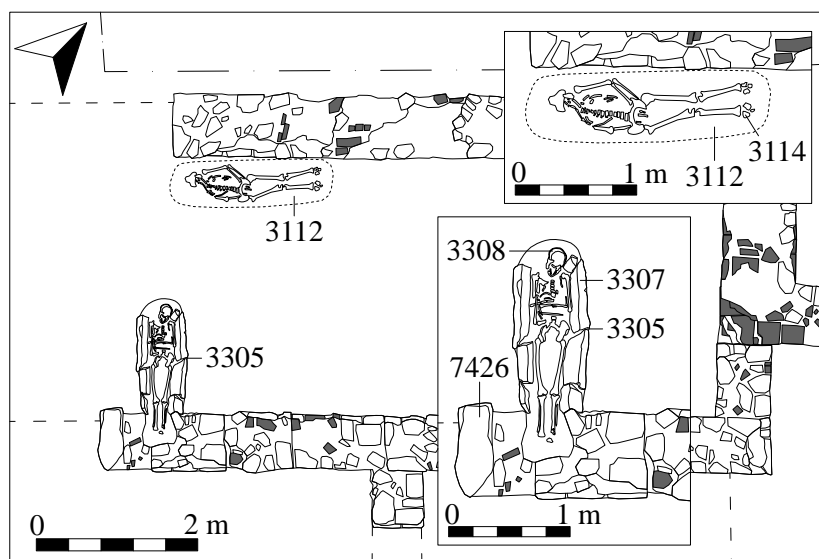


Figure 7.140. Phase 15 graves in the former exonarthex



Figure 7.141. Grave 3112 (20 cm scale)



Figure 7.142. Grave 3305 (photo Massimo Zanfini)

left arm was flexed across the body with the hand placed under the individual's chin; the legs were extended. Infilling the grave was a dark blackish-brown silty clay containing a mix of rubble and tile (3243).⁵² As with the two burials in the exonarthex mentioned above, indications of minor periostitis as well as early signs of arthritis were noticed in this individual as well (see Volume 6.2, Chapter 5).

To the north of the ruins, a further burial of a male aged 20–30 years old was located. Skeleton 3309 had been laid in a supine position orientated east–west, with the arms placed by the sides and the legs extended to the east. The burial

had been badly damaged as the head, left shoulder and lower legs were missing, although disarticulated bones and teeth were found scattered around the burial (Fig. 7.145). This damage occurred either as a result of later cultivation or because it was buried close to the shore edge. Due to the nature of the soil through which it was cut, neither the grave cut nor fill could be distinguished in the black soil 3303, thus the dating of this burial is based on association.

A small stone- and tile-lined feature (3826) ($0.70 \times 0.50 \times 0.20$ m) found cutting layer 3968 in the area of the former east entrance of the *domus* may also have been a

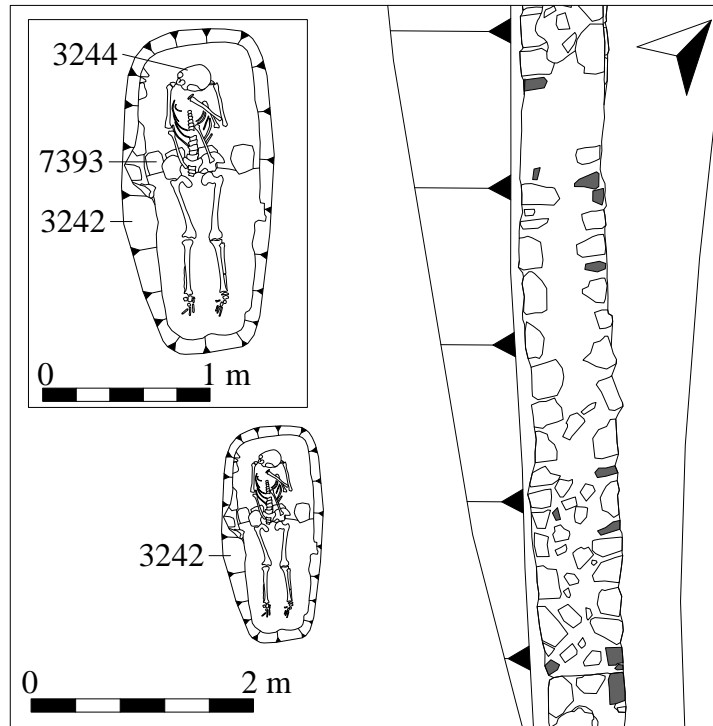


Figure 7.143. Phase 15 grave in the former nave



Figure 7.144. Grave 3242 cutting mosaic pavement 3103. The two stones behind skeleton 3244 are part of the northern rear wall of the Phase 3 domus north portico (photo Massimo Zanfini)

contemporary burial (Fig. 7.146). Only a few small pieces of bone survived within the fill beneath the capping (3827) but from the size of the grave it was possibly for an infant.

Of these burials it is interesting to note that two out of the seven are aligned on the east–west axis of the ruins. Why this occurred is unclear but there is the possibility that these two burials are slightly later than the other five. By the time these two were interred the southern apse may have been totally covered over, whereas the eastern apse was still partially standing. People who did not know the

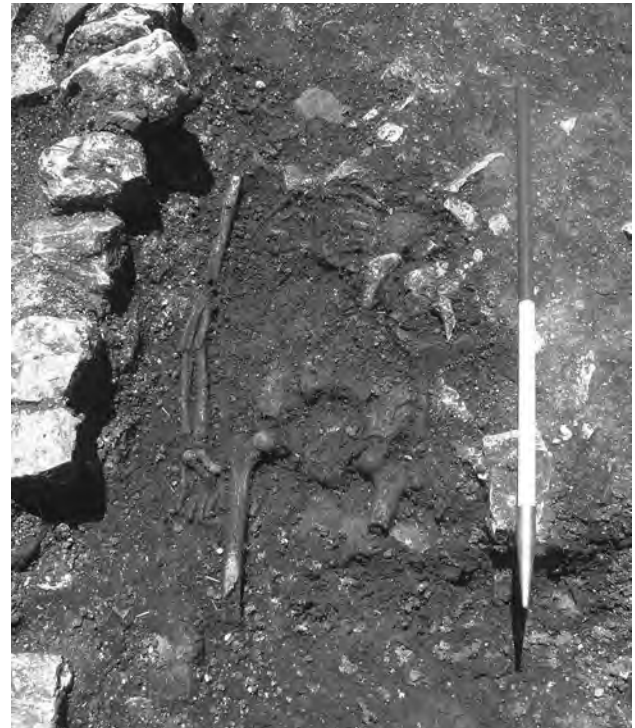


Figure 7.145. Skeleton 3309, looking west (1 m scale)

building may have thought the eastern apse was part of the main basilica and hence aligned the burials facing this way. The only burial that contained any datable finds was grave 3365, the backfill of which (3368) contained late



Figure 7.146. Possible burial 3826 located against the former eastern entrance, before and after excavation (30 cm scale)



Figure 7.147. Rock pile 7453, looking west

4th/5th- and 6th-century material as well as 9th–10th and 10th–11th-century ceramics.

Rock pile

The final visible activity on the site appears to be a

deliberate dumping of a rock pile (7453) to the south of the southern wall of the eastern aisle, against the inner face of wall 3359 (Fig. 7.147). The western edge of the pile partially covered the apse of the former basilica, indicating that by this time the walls of the buildings were at the level that they are seen at today. This pile may represent material

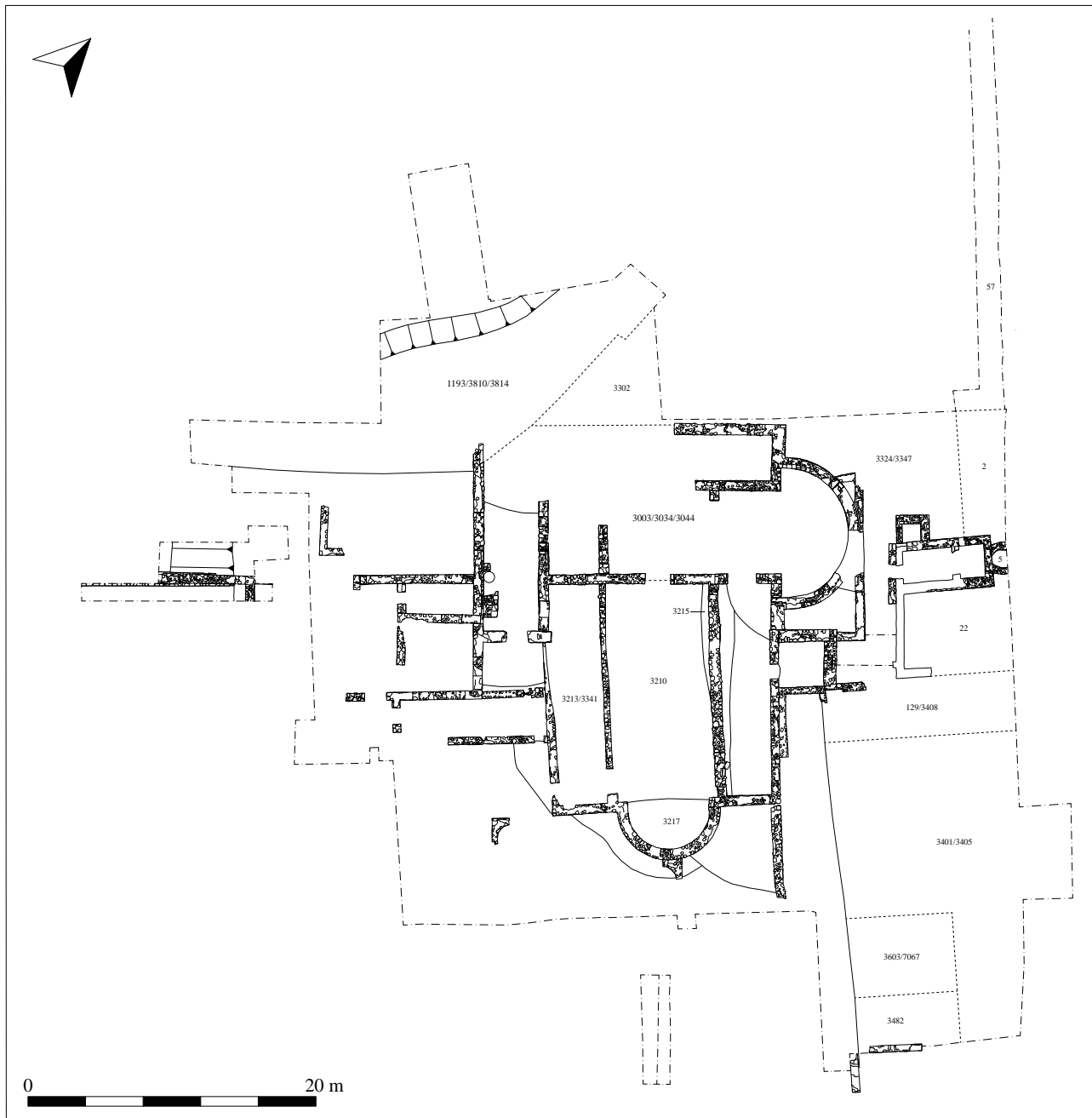


Figure 7.148. The Vrina Plain settlement showing areas of activity in Phase 16 (later 13th century onwards)

stockpiled from quarrying of the decaying building, but equally it may represent a random pile of rubble collected up by a farmer following ploughing and deliberately dumped at the edge of his field.

Summary/Interpretation

Even though most of the buildings were no longer visible, the presence of burials suggests some memory survived of the religious significance of the area. These individuals may have been interred within these ruins as they had not been baptised, or they were from poor families, who could not afford a proper Christian burial.

Phase 16: late 13th century and later

From this time onwards, the site appears to have been largely deserted. Further dark soils built up across the northern and eastern side of the ruins, sealing virtually all the walls (Fig. 7.148). Across the former narthex and exonarthex a dark-grey silt containing occasional limestone, tile and mortar fragments (3003/3034/3044) (0.20–0.30 m thick) built up, sealing the western end of the division walls between the two rooms. This layer extended into the eastern apse and the east aisle. To the north, this deposit continued as layer 3302 and extended as far as the Vivari Channel. A similar deposit (3213/3341) (0.10



Figure 7.150. Post-medieval deposition of alluvial silts across the site leaving only a few upstanding walls visible

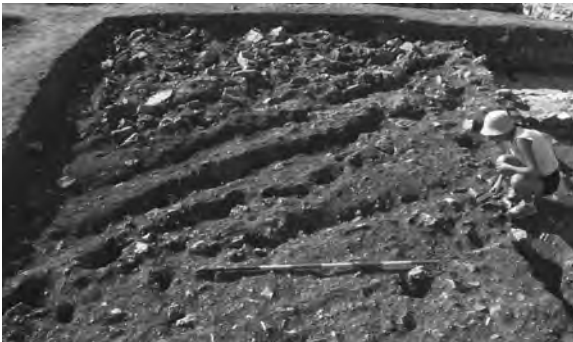


Figure 7.151. Plough marks truncating layer 3044 (1.60 m scale)

Evidence of this activity could be seen across the northwest corner of the ruins where a series of regularly spaced cuts aligned with the drainage ditch was found partially truncating layer 3044 (Fig. 7.151). This deep ploughing probably also caused the damage seen to skeletons 3114 and 3309 and resulted in large quantities of ceramics and coins covering all periods, as well as numerous small finds including a fifth lead seal (SF 5005), being found within this well-turned ploughed soil.

Summary/Interpretation

Activity upon the Vrına Plain appears to have ended

sometime in the 13th century and from this time onwards, apart from a few stray Venetian finds, the ruins were largely deserted. Why this occurred is unclear but it is possible that attempts to support an expanding town from the mid-11th century through agricultural intensification caused an ecological change to the surrounding environment that resulted in the emergence of swamp and wetlands along the edges of the plain.⁵⁵ As a result, only shepherds and fishermen populated this increasingly marshy terrain until, with Chinese support in the 1960s, the Albanian government drained the landscape using dykes to facilitate agricultural investment in root crops and wheat.

Notes

- 1 Contexts 3868, 3906, 3963, 7097.
- 2 Contexts 3007, 3219, 3333, 3736, 3758, 3824.
- 3 Contexts 3, 129, 3004, 3005, 3032, 3049, 3060, 3074, 3094, 3096, 3222, 3300, 3302, 3322, 3325, 3400, 3408, 3469, 3482, 3487, 3488, 3708, 3718, 3753, 3968.
- 4 In the case of cut 3765, this had slightly truncated the northwestern corner of the earlier eastern pier 3072, suggesting this pier may have partially collapsed in the intervening period.
- 5 Wall 3145 was removed during excavation as it was initially thought to be rubble from the later collapse of the building. However, due to differences in the stratification of the two rooms it was realised that this had been a blocking wall.
- 6 It should be noted that the phasing of this activity is based on the relative structural sequence encountered rather than any chronological evidence. Ceramics dating to the first half of the 6th century were recovered from layer 3734, the rubble layer infilling the apse. As these were sealed by floor 3131 this gives a *terminus post quem* for the floor. With this in mind, there is the possibility that the cutting of the doorway through wall 3092 and the flooring of the space could have occurred earlier than Phase 11 and if so, these alterations may relate to the occupation of the site between the 7th to early 10th century (Phase 10).
- 7 Taking into account the possibility suggested in Note 6, the construction of cross wall 3129/3130 would have been part of the initial phase of reconstruction associated with the reuse of the building rather than a secondary build.
- 8 Only the northern half of the apse was excavated as a later kiln (3009), built across the southern side of the apse in Phase 13, meant this side of the kiln was not fully excavated to the level of the floor surface 3131. Despite this it must be assumed further postholes associated with the construction of wall 3129/3130 would have been located here.
- 9 Thank you to Dawn Gooney for this information.
- 10 A closely related openwork buckle is known from Palaiokestritsa on Corfu (Agallopoulou 1973, 423–4). This example has been dated to the late 8th century AD; however, the new example from the Vrina Plain was found in a controlled stratigraphic context (pers. comm., J. Mitchell). For a full description of this buckle see Volume 6.2, Chapter 6, 3.23.
- 11 These remains were discovered when the buckle was conserved by Pippa Pearce, who discusses the cleaning of the buckle in Volume 6.2, Chapter 6 Appendix.
- 12 The capping of the burial probably caused the disturbance that could be seen to the bones in the chest and upper back (thoracic) region in that the absence of soil over the remains allowed for movement of the bones during decomposition (pers. comm., D. Gooney).
- 13 The cut was initially dug in 2005 but the high water table that season meant the stones could not be lifted. In the following season, the water level was lower and the intention had been to investigate the cut further. Unfortunately before this could happen the cut was infilled as part of the conservation of the basilica mosaic.
- 14 Fragments of late 6th-century pottery were recovered from 7007.
- 15 This is thought to be a funerary inscription dedicated to an individual named Honoratus. For a full description Volume 6.2, Chapter 6, 14.6.
- 16 Over time the raking out of the kiln seems to have caused a slight dip in the base of the flue. This action of cleaning out the flue may explain how some fragments of medieval pottery were found in the Phase 7 layer 3337, the raking having removed the overlying layers, exposing layer 3337 beneath.
- 17 See Volume 6.2, Chapter 1. Few if any pot wasters were found in or around the kiln suggesting that any such material must have been removed and possibly dumped into the Vivari Channel.
- 18 The southern side of the grave appeared to conform to the curve of the apse implying the wall of the pool was still visible when the grave was cut.
- 19 The reason for the strange positioning of the legs might be that the grave was originally dug for another individual and was then too small for the young man eventually interred within it.
- 20 Beta 260139. The radiocarbon dating of the skeletons was undertaken by the Beta Analytic Radiocarbon Dating Laboratory, Miami, Florida, USA.
- 21 It should be noted that this did not always occur as to the west the cut of a possibly unfinished grave (3874), defined by a sub-rectangular cut (1.55 × 0.72 m) orientated east–west, was found in the western apse of the pool. Again deposit 3707/3736 was not very thick in this area and the cut of the grave was only 0.12 m deep before the floor of the pool was revealed. Instead of digging through the floor to enable the cut to be used it was abandoned and deliberately infilled (3870).
- 22 Beta 260141.
- 23 The cutting of the grave removed c. 0.30 m of wall 3719 and the base of this truncation matched the level of the lining along the eastern and southern sides of the grave.
- 24 Beta 260138.
- 25 The kiln was constructed on the edge of the Vivari Channel and cut layer 87. It is unclear what the kiln was used for as only a small area of it was revealed. A rough plan of the structure was made but excavation was halted due to the limited time available, the intention being to investigate it properly the following season. Unfortunately, this did not happen and instead the kiln was backfilled.
- 26 Combined, these layers raised the level of this area by 0.40 m.
- 27 A small lump of green glass cake (SF 6240) was also recovered from this layer.
- 28 Wk-25582. The C14 dating was undertaken by the Radiocarbon Dating Laboratory of the University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand.
- 29 Due to the similarity between the fill of the grave (3427)

- and the layer it was cut through (3406) the cut for the burial was missed.
- 30 Beta 260137.
- 31 The dating of this structure is based on the fact it was located directly below the dark soil layer 1006 that built up across this end of site following the abandonment of the 10th-century house.
- 32 The large number of coins and the discovery of the steelyard balance may find an analogy in the excavations of a series of Byzantine shops in Sardis dated to the 7th century. Harris (2004, 114–15) suggests the balances may have been ‘work-a-day tools’ of officials involved in collecting tolls and taxes and were used to check the weight value of the currency. However, the size of the chains suggests they were used to weigh larger items, with one possibility being they were used to weigh fish, an important locally caught commodity that the household may have been involved in trading (see Chapter 14).
- 33 Within the narthex, as well as covering the flagstone floor 3042 and the hearth, layer 3037/3058/3110 also infilled the cuts left by the posts.
- 34 Unfortunately the site records do not contain detailed descriptions of these iron strips.
- 35 The site records indicate that before the grave was identified a large, flat limestone slab was removed in this general area. This slab can be seen in the section drawn during the 2006 excavations as well as in the photograph taken of the section. Assuming it is part of the ‘pillow’ structure, this stone would have been located over the skull of the individual.
- 36 Molla, Paris and Venturini 2013, 263–7.
- 37 Greenslade, Leppard and Logue 2013, 63.
- 38 The rim of this vessel was found mixed in with layer 3322, a post-abandonment deposit located across the courtyard and north portico just to the west of this aisle.
- 39 Pers. comm., J. Vroom.
- 40 Over time the floor of this space had slumped due to the soft nature of the underlying deposits.
- 41 Contexts 3382, 3384, 3386, 3388, 3390, 3392, 3394, 3396, 3398, 3742, 3744, 3746, 3748, 3750, 3752, 3832, 3834 and 3836.
- 42 For the Triconch Palace see Bowden, Culwick *et al.* 2011, 139–44; for the Merchant’s House see Bowden, Crowson *et al.* 2011, 208–17.
- 43 Ugolini 1927.
- 44 There is the possibility that this relic had been removed at the time of the initial abandonment of the basilica in the second half of the 6th century and that this was a speculative hole dug at this time to see whether there were any items of value remaining beneath the apse. A hole dug through the floor and underlying core of the Temple mausoleum is also thought to have been dug for a similar reason (see Chapter 8).
- 45 In the case of kiln 3009, the superstructure of the kiln had collapsed and covered the visible remains of the kiln prior to this, as indicated by layer 3006. The flue had also collapsed (3763) and sealed a light-grey silt (3768) before the build-up of 3048. Kiln 3111 had similarly collapsed in on itself before layer 3048 built up. The late 9th-century lead seal of Kallonas (SF 3468) was found on top of this collapse.
- 46 All these small finds apart from SF 6421 are illustrated in Volume 6.2, Chapter 6.
- 47 The glass cakes from layer 3954 seem to match those found in layer 3945 and suggest there may have been some mixing of the layers as a result of the demolition of the various buildings in this northwest area of the site.
- 48 When found this capital was the first indication that a possible basilica structure existed close by. At the time (in 2002) it was initially thought wall 2112 might be part of this structure due to the curving eastern end of the wall and also because the capital was found just beyond the wall.
- 49 Pavlides and Caputo 2004, 159–88.
- 50 Due to the similarity between the fill of the grave (3113) and the layer it was cut through (3060), the cut for the burial was missed.
- 51 A further stone was probably located at the northern end of the grave, as the site record notes this was removed during excavation prior to the discovery of the burial.
- 52 Due to this deposit matching the surrounding context 3216 through which it was cut, the grave was only picked up at the level of the tile spread (3223).
- 53 The intrusive 13th/14th-century ceramic fragments found in layer 3488 probably came from layer 3482, as this layer overlies 3488.
- 54 Contexts 3/86/99/1000/1001/1005/2090/2108/3000/3200/3300/3400/3402/3454/7050/7900.
- 55 Bescoby, Barclay and Andrews 2008, 2574–9; Bescoby 2013, 22–30; Lane *et al.* 2004, 27–46.

8 The Temple mausoleum excavations

Simon Greenslade and Sarah Leppard with Oliver Gilkes

Introduction

The remains of what is now referred to as the Temple mausoleum are a prominent feature on the Vrina Plain (Fig. 8.1).¹ The site was first excavated in the late 1980s by the Albanian Institute of Archaeology. At the time, due to the presence of a thick mortar surface on the building's floor and walls, as well as its proximity to the aqueduct (located c. 3.30 m to the east of it), this rectangular building was interpreted as a cistern.² During 2004 the building was once again examined, as part of the major excavations carried out by the Butrint Foundation in collaboration with the Albanian Institute of Archaeology on the Vrina Plain. Cleaning of the building revealed its form in more detail and cast doubt on the original interpretation. The building was constructed on a podium with a door located at the western end, where the robbed-out impressions of a staircase were found fronting the building. Internally, the impressions of

five rectangular structures were found at the eastern end of the building, which again indicated that this had not been a cistern. The earlier excavations had recovered sculptural pieces across the site, including a portrait head, as well as reliefs and architectural fragments that appeared to be funerary in nature.³ As fragments of human bones were also found within the backfill from the 1980s excavations, the building was initially reinterpreted as a mausoleum, possibly a *heroon*, and the focus of a funerary cult of a prestigious individual.⁴ In 2005, excavations around the sides of the building uncovered further traces of broken sculptural pieces. These excavations also revealed the *in situ* fragments of the lower marble facing and surrounding mouldings of the building, indicating that this was an imposing structure. Continuing excavations in 2006 and 2007 exposed an area in front of the mausoleum steps measuring 13 m by 10 m that revealed an earlier building

Table 8.1. Summary of the Temple mausoleum phases

<i>Phase</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Summary</i>
1–2	Mid-1st–early 3rd century	Aqueduct constructed, cut into deposit containing Late Republican pottery. Two-roomed building located to the west of it
3	Mid-3rd–mid-4th century	Road layout altered with the construction of <i>domus</i> across western suburb. Large Temple mausoleum constructed along eastern side of new road; new service building with portico built to west
4–6	Late 4th–late 5th century	Temple mausoleum maintained but deteriorating. Rough wall built to east of it. Alterations made to service building; portico sub-divided
7–8	Early–mid-6th century	Road re-surfaced and new wall built along the western edge of it. Further deterioration of Temple mausoleum. Some tombs destroyed. Small-scale domestic activity within the <i>cella</i> . Alterations made to service building; small building built across former portico
9–10	Late 6th century–early 9th century	Buildings abandoned and area in decline. Rubble and silts building up across area. Silting up of the road forms a hollow-way. Rough wall on western side of hollow-way may suggest some use of area
11	Mid-9th–mid-10th century	Demolition and robbing of Temple mausoleum. Arcade of aqueduct collapses due to demolition of mausoleum's eastern wall
12	Late 10th–11th century	Thick silty clay deposits build up across the area. Small <i>cappuccina</i> burial inserted along south side of mausoleum
13–16	11th century onwards	Abandonment of area. Silty clay deposits continue to form across area covering much of mausoleum with only southern wall remaining visible



Figure 8.1. View of the Vrina Plain settlement and Temple mausoleum looking towards Butrint

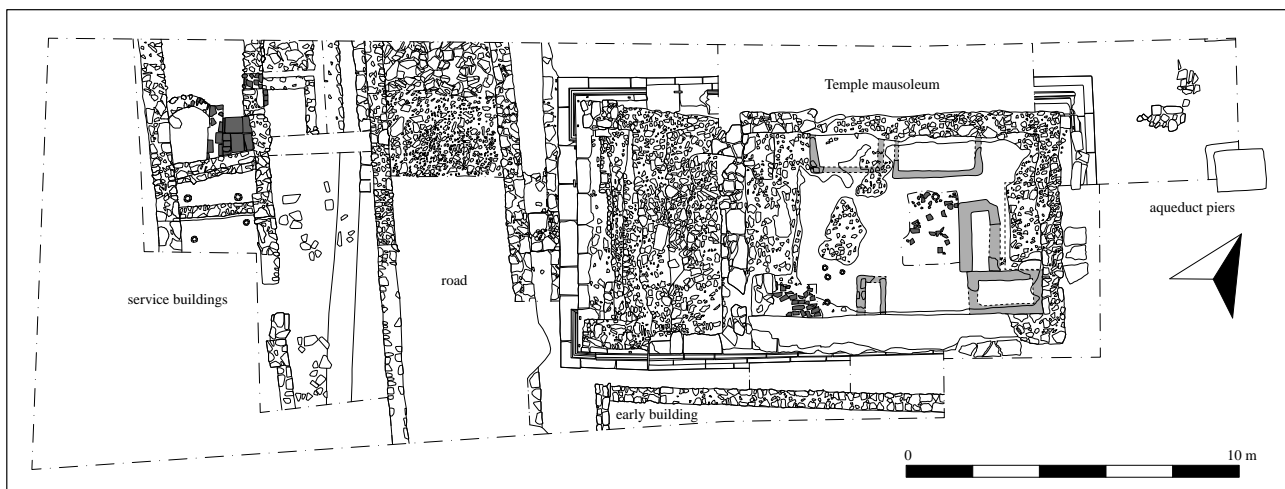


Figure 8.2. Plan of the Temple mausoleum excavations

on the south side of the mausoleum, a road directly in front of the steps, and further later buildings to the west of the road (Fig. 8.2 and Plate 8.1).

This chapter describes the full archaeological sequence of the excavations around the Temple mausoleum.

Phases 1 and 2: mid-1st to early 3rd century

The earliest structures revealed in this area comprised a possible two-room building on the southeastern side of the excavation area and, at the very eastern side of the trench, two piers of the aqueduct (Fig. 8.3).

The remains of the southeastern building consisted of one wall (5016) aligned east–west with a further wall (5043) forming the western extent of the building. Wall 5016 was probably an interior wall and was fairly rough in build, with unworked limestone and tile fragments set in a coarse mortar; there were no clear courses in the build. The wall ran for 8.60 m into the limit of the excavation area and was 0.45 m in width. At its western end it terminated neatly with flat corner stones to form a doorway 1.50 m wide, with a large limestone threshold 1.30 m in length. This doorway would have led to a further room to the north that must have been removed to allow

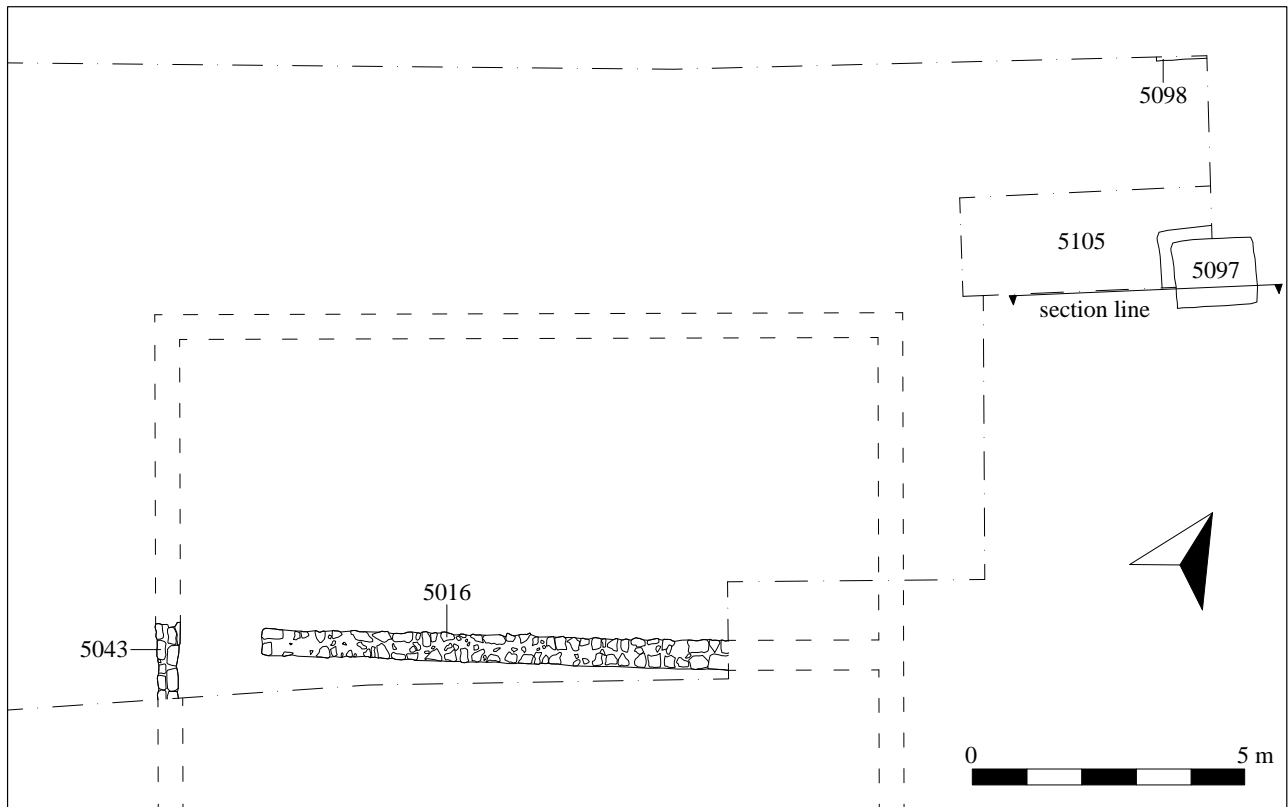


Figure 8.3. Plan of the Phase 1/2 building and aqueduct piers prior to the construction of the Temple mausoleum (mid-1st to early 3rd century)



Figure 8.4. The aqueduct piers 5098 and 5097, looking east (1 m scale)

the construction of the mausoleum. Only a short length of wall 5043 was revealed in these excavations. Running north to south for 0.90 m and with a width of 0.45 m, it formed the western limit of the room here. It would have originally continued to the north to form a further room but was clearly truncated at its northern end when the mausoleum was constructed.⁵ Excavation in this area was limited and did not reach any occupation levels associated with this earliest building, so its use is not known. It is, however, located right beside the aqueduct that supplied Butrint with fresh water as two of the aqueduct piers were

uncovered just 3.50 m to the east of the back wall of the later Temple mausoleum.⁶

The northernmost pier (5098) was only partially revealed at the edge of the trench, while more of the southern pier (5097) was uncovered (Fig. 8.4). Both piers were revealed to have a substantial foundation of rubble bonded with the same firm yellow mortar. Pier 5097 remained standing to a height of 1.27 m on a foundation 0.45 m high; this foundation jutting out from the face of the pier by 0.15 m and was rectangular in plan, measuring 1.40 m east–west and 1.13 m north–south. The distance between the two piers was 3.50 m, which matches the distance between the other aqueduct piers that survive across the Vrina Plain to the south.⁷ In the later layers covering this area a large fallen piece of an arch segment was uncovered, showing that the upper arches of the aqueduct were constructed from well-dressed tiles set neatly in the same yellow mortar as the piers.

The piers cut thick dark-grey clay and silt deposit (5105) that contained several ceramic and glass finds (Fig. 8.5). The ceramics – fragments of white buff amphorae – were all covered in splashes of pitch, while two fragments of glass were melted lumps, suggesting this deposit was a working surface, possibly during the construction of the aqueduct. The ceramics date to the Late Republican period, supporting the proposed 1st-century AD date of construction for the aqueduct.⁸

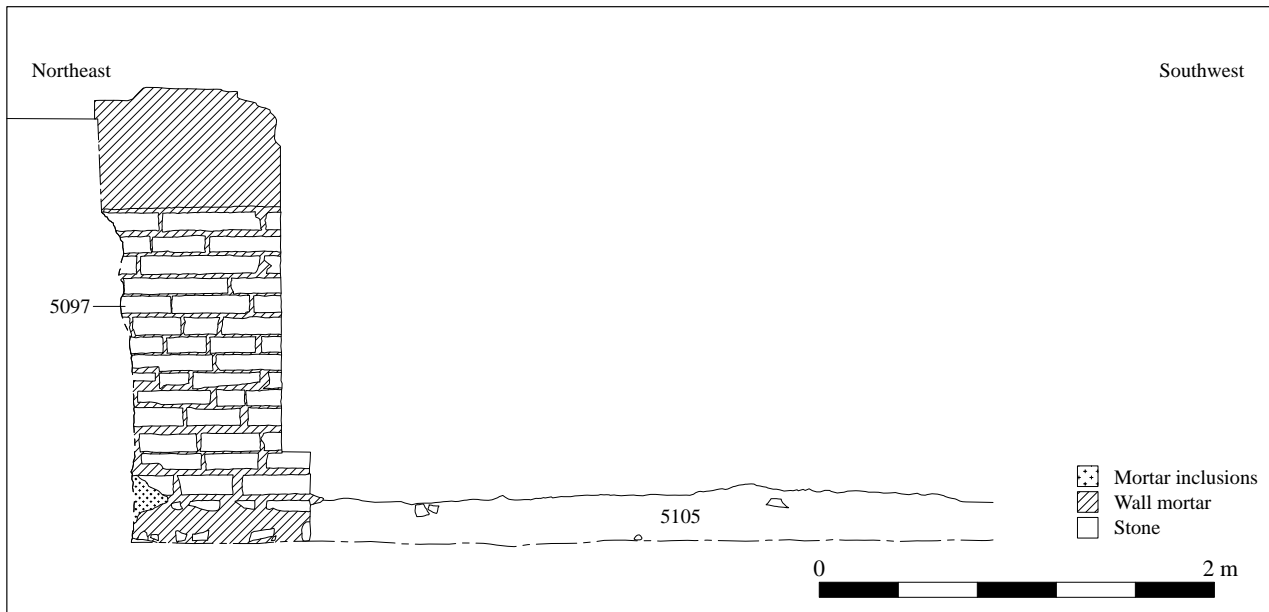


Figure 8.5. Northwest-facing section of aqueduct pier 5097 cutting layer 5105. See Fig. 8.3 for location

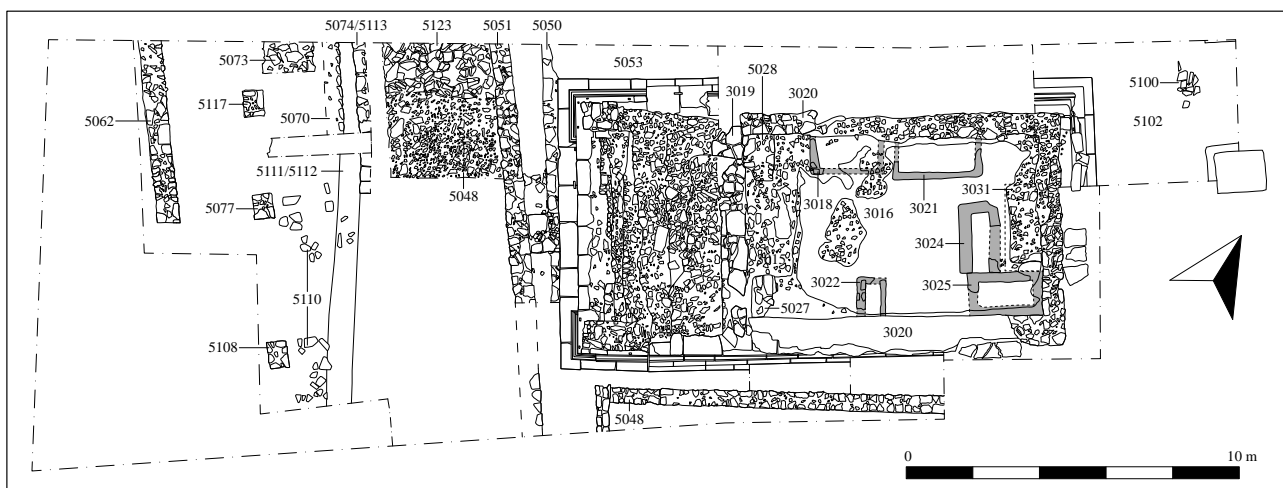


Figure 8.6. Plan of the Temple mausoleum, the road and service buildings in Phase 3 (mid-3rd to mid-4th century)

Phase 3: mid-3rd to mid-4th century

During the 3rd century the nature of the occupation of the Vrina Plain changed. Excavations in the western suburb have shown that during this century the urban fabric of the Vrina settlement was altered with the construction of a large, opulent and spacious *domus* over this area (see Chapter 4). At the same time this eastern area was also altered, with a new road spurring off from the earlier valley road and leading to the bridgehead being built across the area. Fronting this road on the east side, a large Temple mausoleum was constructed; opposite this, on the western side of the road, a further building with a portico was constructed, possibly part of a complex of service buildings for the villa, situated near its east entrance (Fig. 8.6).

The roadway uncovered in this excavation ran roughly

north–south across the trench and included two drains that ran along either side of the road.⁹ The alignment of the road and drains matched that of the portico and western service building. Located roughly 1.50 m to the east of the portico piers of the service building (see below) was the western road drain. Constructed with two side walls (5070 and 5074/5113), its full width was a little over 1.50 m but its internal space was just 0.50 m wide; only 2.70 m of its length was uncovered in these excavations. Only the lower courses of the western wall 5070 remained; constructed with tiles set into a sandy mortar it measured 0.50 m wide. The eastern wall 5074/5113 was much narrower in width at 0.37 m and was constructed of larger stones, its western face being a line of very large limestone blocks with smaller blocks filling in behind. It can be presumed that the upper

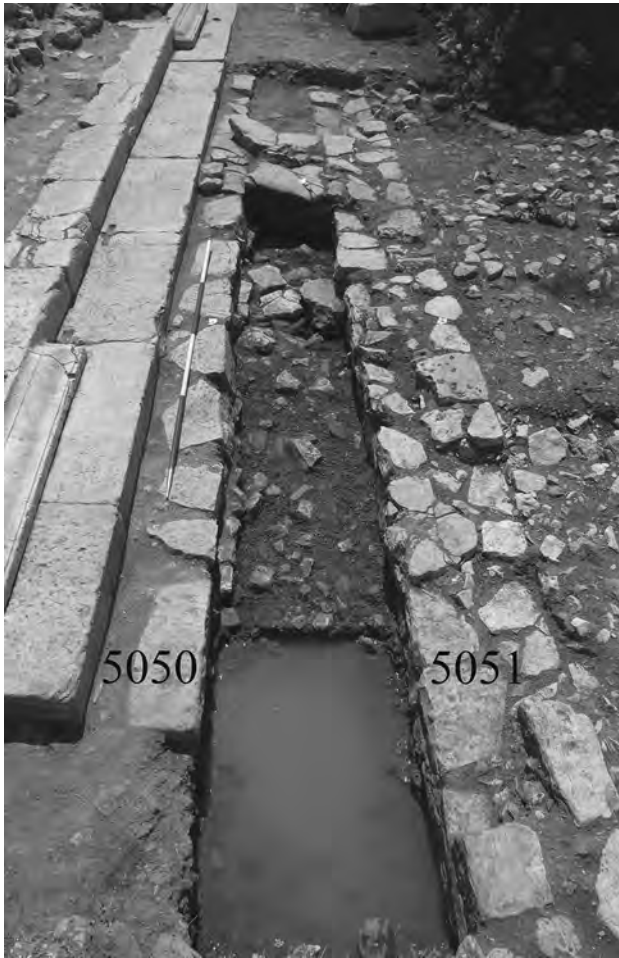


Figure 8.7. Drain 5050/5051, looking south. The lowest step of the Temple mausoleum can be seen running along the eastern side of drain wall 5050 (2 m scale)

courses of 5070 may have been constructed with similar limestone blocks that were removed in antiquity. The roadway itself measured a little more than 3.50 m wide; the walls of the eastern drain (5051 and 5050) marked its eastern limit. The western wall (5051) ran along the eastern edge of the road. It was constructed with medium-sized limestone blocks cut into fairly regular rectangular shapes and set in good clear courses. It was roughly 0.60 m in width and some 8 m of it was uncovered. Its opposing wall (5050) was built between 0.90 m and 0.50 m to the east; it did not run exactly parallel and the space between the two walls narrowed to the south (Fig. 8.7). The drain wall 5050 was slightly narrower in width than 5051 at 0.50 m and was constructed with larger stones to its upper course, set upon lower courses of smaller angular limestone blocks. This drain wall ran neatly along the base of the front step of the Temple mausoleum and is potentially a rebuild of an earlier wall. Its realignment at a slight angle to 5051 could suggest the road and original drain were built just prior to the mausoleum, the eastern side of the drain being altered later to fit with the mausoleum when it was constructed. The deposits below this drain were excavated (albeit through the

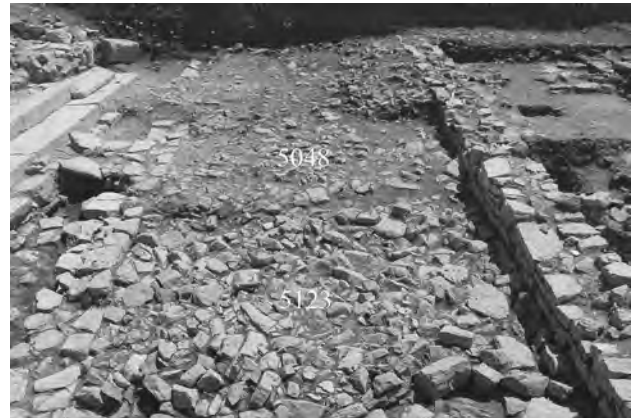


Figure 8.8. View of the road fronting the Temple mausoleum showing the rubble foundation 5123 and the make-up layer 5048

water table) and dated from the late 1st to 2nd century AD. The lowest layer (5055) was a green-coloured sandy clay with frequent inclusions of tile and limestone along with a large amount of ceramics and animal bones. This deposit pre-dated any major construction in this area, but may have been related to the Phase 1/2 building to the southeast; the ceramics dated this layer to the late 1st/2nd century AD. Covering this was 5058, a sandy layer with tiles set into it which appeared to have been laid in preparation for the construction of the drain and roadway; the drain walls (5050 and 5051) were set onto this layer. Ceramics from this layer dated to the 2nd century AD.

The road surface (5048) was laid between the two drains (Fig. 8.8). This surface was composed of a layer of medium to large angular limestone blocks and slabs set very close together forming a solid, if slightly uneven, base across the road area, with larger angular blocks (5123) underlying it forming a firm foundation. Roughly 4 m of this road surface was uncovered and while the stones were laid fairly flat, the surface certainly undulated to quite an extent. There were no signs of wheel ruts in this stretch of the surface and it may be that large stone slabs had been placed over 5048 to form the actual surface of the road, these having been subsequently robbed at a later date. Plenty of ceramic and bone debris was recovered from this layer, however, with the ceramics dating from the 1st to the 3rd century AD.¹⁰

Further evidence of this roadway was found in the initial trial excavations carried out within the drainage ditch c. 18.60 m to the north (Fig. 8.9). Although only a small area was revealed, the inner side walls of both roadside drains were revealed (walls 1123 and 1043), as was the road surface (1197). The alignment of the road had altered slightly at this point and was now roughly 5° to the west. This alteration may have been due to topographical reasons or so that it could align better with the bridge. A wall (1044/1194/1195/1196) positioned 1.40 m beyond the western drain wall 1043 indicates that, as with the southern part of the road, buildings lined the sides of the new road in this area too.

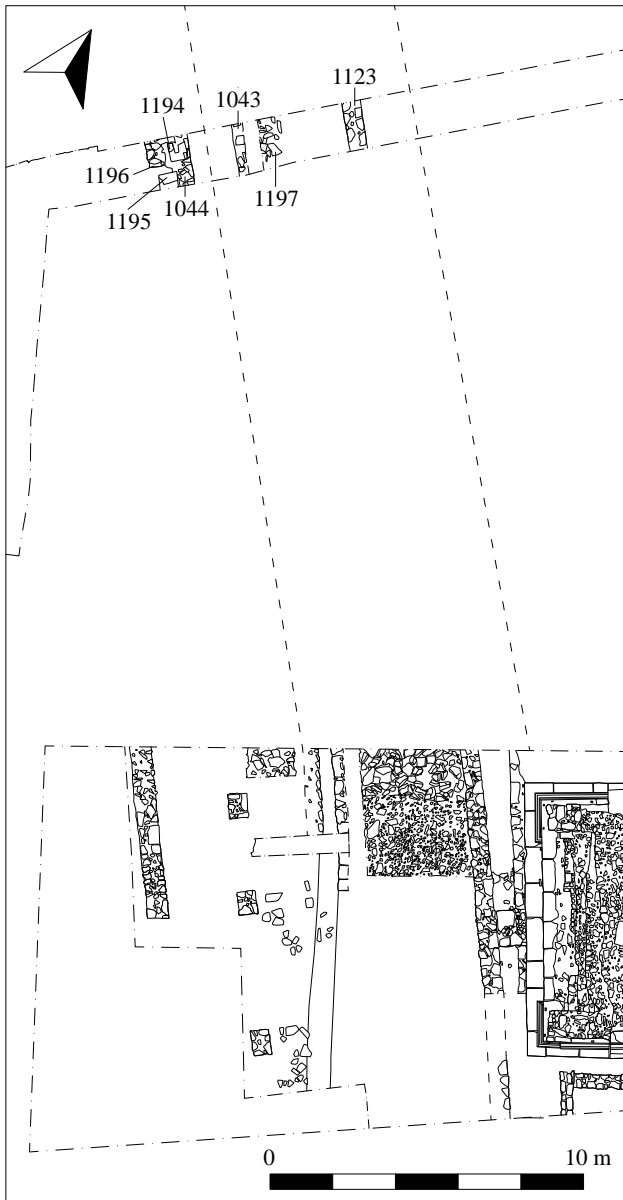


Figure 8.9. Plan of the drain walls 1123 and 1043 and road surface 1197 located in the initial drainage ditch excavations 18.60 m to the north of the Temple mausoleum excavations

Previously it had been thought this road (5048) related to the initial layout of the suburban settlement and formed the main road from Butrint to Mursia.¹¹ However, the alignment of the new road did not match those of the other early roads associated with the 1st-century settlement, being roughly 16° to the east of these, while a comparison of the levels between these roads indicates that the surface of road 5048 was almost 0.30 m higher. The level of 5048 does, however, match that of the approach road to the 3rd-century *domus*. When combined with the finds of 1st- to 3rd-century pottery in the road make-up it can now be suggested that road 5048 is contemporary with the new *domus* and that it would have formed the new route of the principal valley road leading to the coast road that passed



Figure 8.10. View of the service building looking east towards the Temple mausoleum

close to Çuka e Ajtoit, the *domus* having been built over the earlier northwestern end of the road (see Fig. 4.30).

On the western side of the road was the possible service building. Only the eastern façade of this building was uncovered (5062) (Fig. 8.10). This wall ran north–south across the western end of the trench, clearly continuing to both north and south beyond the trench extent. It measured a substantial 0.68–0.70 m in width and was constructed with large, neatly cut limestone blocks; there was a possible doorway at one end (Fig. 8.11). These well-dressed blocks created a neat face to the wall, indicative of an imposing façade wall; this wall fronted onto a portico. The portico was represented by three pier bases (5117, 5077 and 5108 from north to south) forming a colonnade aligned with the roadway, each set c. 2.30 m apart and slightly more than 2 m to the east of wall 5062. All three piers were built with the same construction technique and all measured 0.74 × 0.58 m, set in a north–south alignment. Built with cut limestone blocks, they were very neatly finished on their outer faces, as would be expected for piers creating a colonnade fronting a frequently used roadway.

Adjacent to the portico were two areas of paving (5073 and 5110) that appeared to be contemporary with the building and portico, forming a paved area between the portico and the road. The large limestone slabs of 5073 were located against the northern section of the trench; their surfaces were heavily worn and were at the same level as the road surface 5048. The slabs would have originally covered over the walls of the drain (5070 and 5074/5113). Roughly 2.50 m to the south of these slabs were the remains of 5110, formed with slightly smaller rough limestone slabs and some fragments of tiles, located between piers 5077 and 5108. This part of the surface had not survived quite as well as 5073 but did show clearly that it had originally covered the road drain as several slabs were found tipped into the fill of the drain (5111/5112/5069).

Fronting the road on its eastern side was the Temple mausoleum. Built to be highly visible, the mausoleum

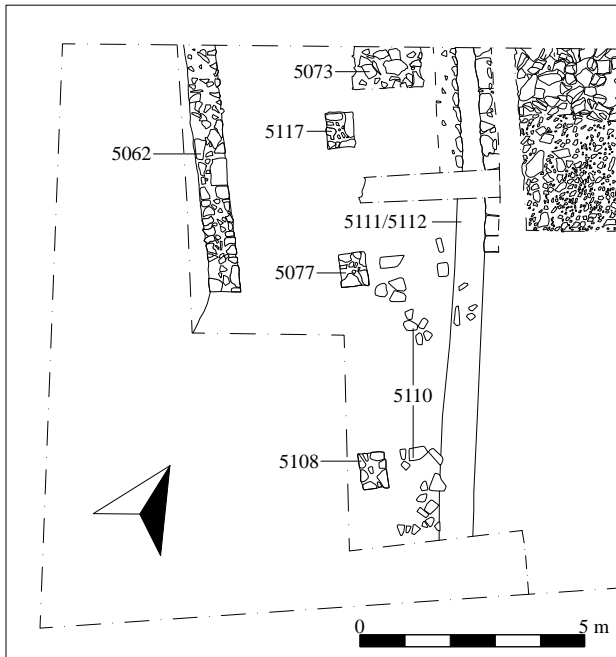


Figure 8.11. Plan of the service building

was rectangular in form and measured 16.17×8.67 m (Fig. 8.12). Orientated east–west, the new building was constructed over the northern room of the earlier building defined by walls 5043 and 5016. In order to do this the northern end of wall 5043 was demolished. The earlier building does not seem to have been connected to the mausoleum in any way as the northern doorway of the earlier eastern room was blocked in by wall 5044.

The core of the mausoleum's podium was constructed of *opus caementicium* (3015) poured into shuttering in lifts of roughly 0.60 m high, the total height of the podium being 1.50–1.80 m. The marks of the shuttering can still be seen on the cement and rubble core along the southern face of the *cella* (Fig. 8.13). The principal stone elements (3020, 5027, 5028), plinth, steps and mouldings, were constructed during this process. It is apparent that the eastern, *cella*, section of the structure was erected first, with the steps and *pronaos* being added to the west at a later stage of the same construction process.

The sides of the *cella*, steps and *antes* were clad in blocks and slabs of fine grey limestone up to 0.20 m thick. Most of the side slabs were missing, having been robbed away as *spolia*, but the iron grapples and clamps that fixed them into position are visible in the upper surface of the moulding (Fig. 8.14). This moulding ran all around the sides, the rear and the *antes* above the two steps of the plinth. The moulding is comprised of a simple and elegant *cyma recta* whose proportions varied slightly from area to area. An unusual element was the offsetting of the moulding around the western, front section of the building. This lay c. 0.45 m lower than the moulding of the rest of the building. In part this was due to the lack of an upper step to the plinth in this area, although normally the moulding continues



Figure 8.12. Kite view of the Temple mausoleum



Figure 8.13. Detail of the shuttering marks visible in the cement and rubble core along the southern side of the *cella* (20 cm scale)

around the entire structure. The slightly later addition of the steps, and the offset moulding, may have been part of some alteration to the original scheme. An upper, opposed moulding of the same design was also included at the top of the podium, below the wall of the *cella*. Most of this had been broken during the demolition process, but substantial elements were recovered during the excavation.

The *cella* had been badly damaged, but enough remained of its southern wall and internal space to clarify its arrangement (Fig. 8.15). Internally, it measured 8×5.45 m (Fig. 8.16). The walls were of mortared bricks resting on a foundation of stone blocks and substantial *bipedales* tiles. The particular type of brickwork was a fine *opus listatum*,

with triangular-cut bricks set into the mortared rubble core of the wall. The mortar interstices were about 5 mm thick, underlining the quality of the technique. The floor of the *cella* was of *cocciopesto* mortar (3016) which, in places where it had not been exposed to the elements since the excavations of the 1980s, was finely laid and finished. The interior walls had clearly been veneered in stone and marble, at least up to a certain height. On the interior of the surviving southern wall there was a deposit of mortar, up to 20 mm thick, for the stone and marble veneers to be set in. On the interior of the southern door jamb (5027) a small fragment of grey-white marble veneer is still set against a thick mortar backing. Fragments of veneer that



Figure 8.14. Detail of the iron grapples and clamps used to fix the limestone slabs of the southwest corner ante



Figure 8.15. The Temple mausoleum, looking east (photo Ilir Gjipali)

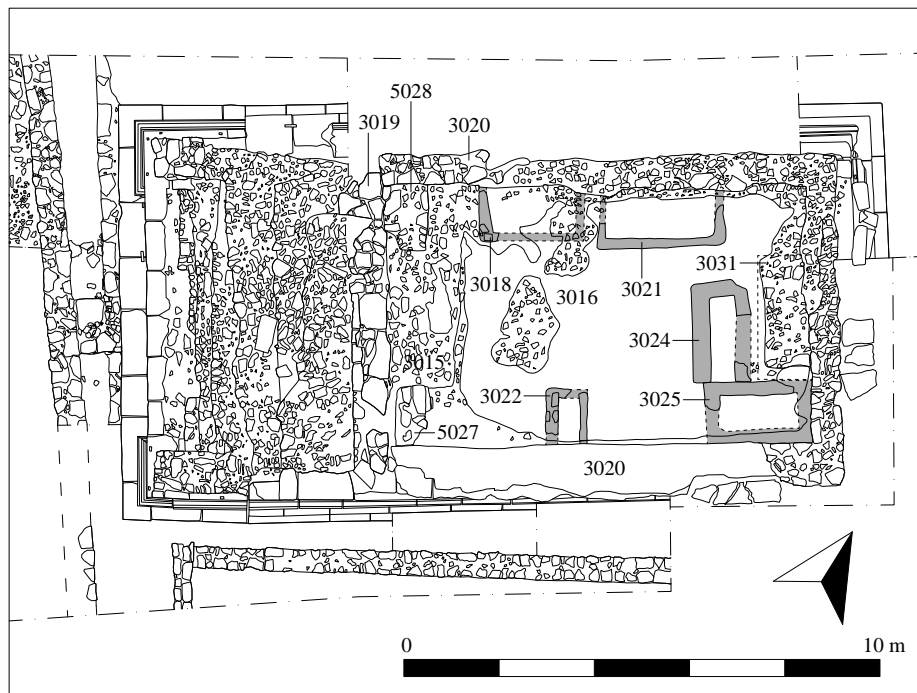


Figure 8.16. Plan of the Temple mausoleum

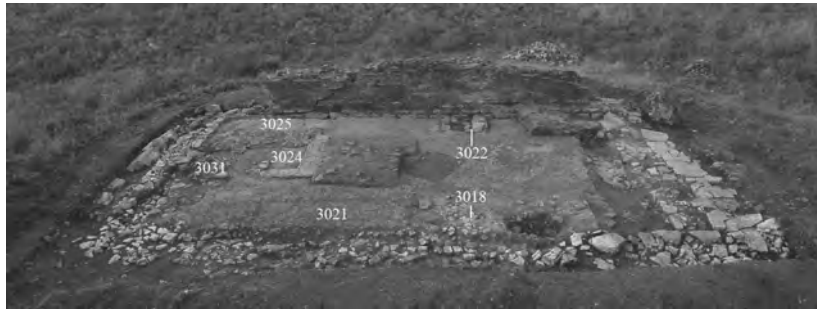


Figure 8.17. View of the cella showing the position of the tomb foundations



Figure 8.18. Detail of tomb foundations 3022, 3024, 3025 and 3031

may well have adorned this building were found throughout the excavations. This included various grey and white marbles as well as some slabs of *verde antico*. All the architectural elements seem to have been cut from a white, medium-grained marble with prominent grey-green veining characteristic of Pentelic marble.

There were a number of internal rectangular structures of varying sizes, constructed from mortared tiles, built upon the *cocciopesto* floor (Fig. 8.17). Four of these remained partly intact (3018, 3022, 3024 and 3025) while the remains of possibly two others (3021 and 3031) were seen as slight imprints in the floor (Fig. 8.18). The presence of human bones and fragments of marble sarcophagi suggests that these were either the foundations of the tombs, or supports for the sarcophagi.

In all at least 58 fragments of funerary material were found in and around the mausoleum in layers associated with the later destruction and abandonment of the structure. The vast majority of these were fragments of Attic-style sarcophagi of high-quality Pentelic marble, with at least two being from *kline* sarcophagi.¹² Many of the finds suggest these sarcophagi were very large, possibly up to 1.15 × 2.30 m in size and 1–1.20 m in height. Fragments of dogs as well as figures in rapid movement suggest some of the

tombs were decorated with scenes of either hunting, war or even Dionysiac celebrations (Fig. 8.19). Fragments of a garland sarcophagus may also be represented. Rather than having been produced in local workshops, the form and style of the pieces suggest they were imported from Greece or Asia Minor in a finished state.¹³

The exterior of the *cella* appears to have been simply finished. Either the brickwork was left exposed, or a thin render was applied to the surface. Some evidence for rendering was found on a section of fallen wall to the rear of the building. The exterior of the extant southern wall was badly damaged during medieval robbing and thus nothing of its outer face is to be seen.

An axial doorway some 3.30 m wide led through the western wall of the *cella* into the area of the *pronaos*. Here there are still some surviving fragments of stone paving slabs (3019), now much degraded. Originally the *pronaos* area was likely to have been 2.35 m wide across the full width of the temple. At the sides of this area the stone blocks of the cladding are far more substantial, extending up to 1.20 m into the *pronaos* below its pavement. This would have provided a solid foundation to bear the load of the colonnade at this point. Although no columns were found from the site (see below), it is suggested the colonnade was



Figure 8.19. Sarcophagus fragments including the left hand of a human figure holding a rod, the head of a panther, the nose and mouth of a hunting dog, and a lion head filial, from layer 5064 (5 cm scale)



Figure 8.20. The stairway of the Temple mausoleum, looking north

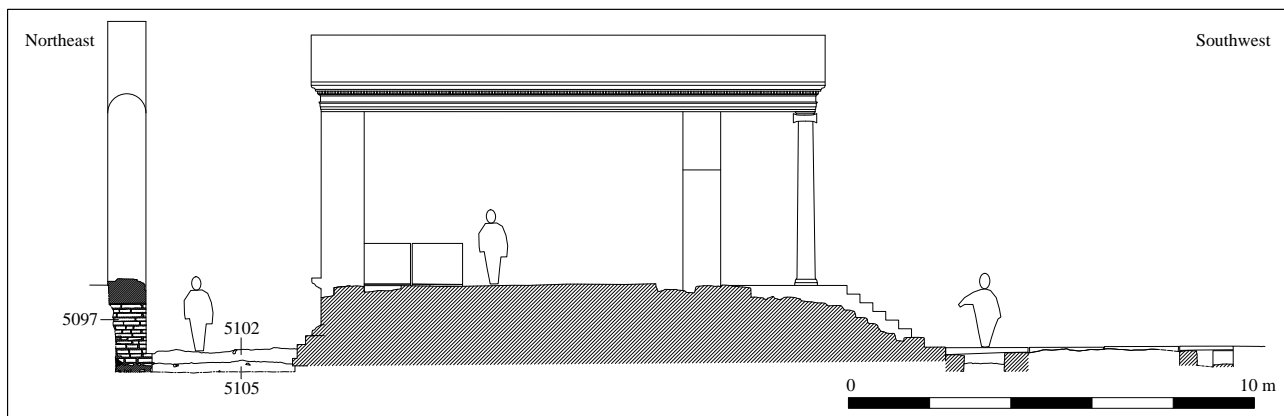


Figure 8.21. Section through the Temple mausoleum showing the relative heights of the area surrounding the building

made up of six columns with Ionic capitals surmounting them.

Beyond the *pronaos* are the *antes* and the stairway (Fig. 8.20). The *antes* were also constructed in *opus caementicium*, faced with stone slabs, and together these projections on the north and south framed the stairs. The latter were 5.73 m wide and fortunately the lowest step survives in position, the others having been robbed away. The surviving step was 0.31 m in height and 0.30 m deep at its narrowest point. Given that the other blocks would rest above this, these measurements provide an estimate of the dimensions of the missing blocks, the settings for which were, in any case, visible in the varying slopes of the *opus caementicium* core of the stairs. Allowing for some minor variation, this would suggest that seven steps existed up to the level of the *pronaos* pavement.

The mausoleum appears to have been built just after the road was finished as limestone and marble chippings from the working of the stones used in the construction of the mausoleum were found in the primary fill of the eastern roadside drain (5052), along with ceramics dating

to the 3rd century. Interestingly though, the position of the structure does not align with the road or the contemporary buildings: its northwestern corner is almost 5° west off the line of the road. Instead, the building is aligned almost true east–west. Conceivably the west-facing aspect of the structure may have been the main governing principle for its orientation. In positioning the mausoleum directly in front of the aqueduct, it is also possible that the *domus* owner was creating a connection between his family and the source of the city's water supply, as he may have provided the necessary funds for the upkeep of the aqueduct. In order to reinforce this connection, the placement of the mausoleum coincides with the point at which the new road and the aqueduct are closest together.

Once constructed, the area around the sides of the mausoleum was levelled over in order to bring it up to a consistent level with the road (Fig. 8.21). This layer (5053/5102) was approximately 0.30 m thick and contained a range of pottery including a fragment of ESB 71 dated to the Hadrianic period, as well as early/mid-3rd-century fragments.¹⁴ Various fragments of glass were

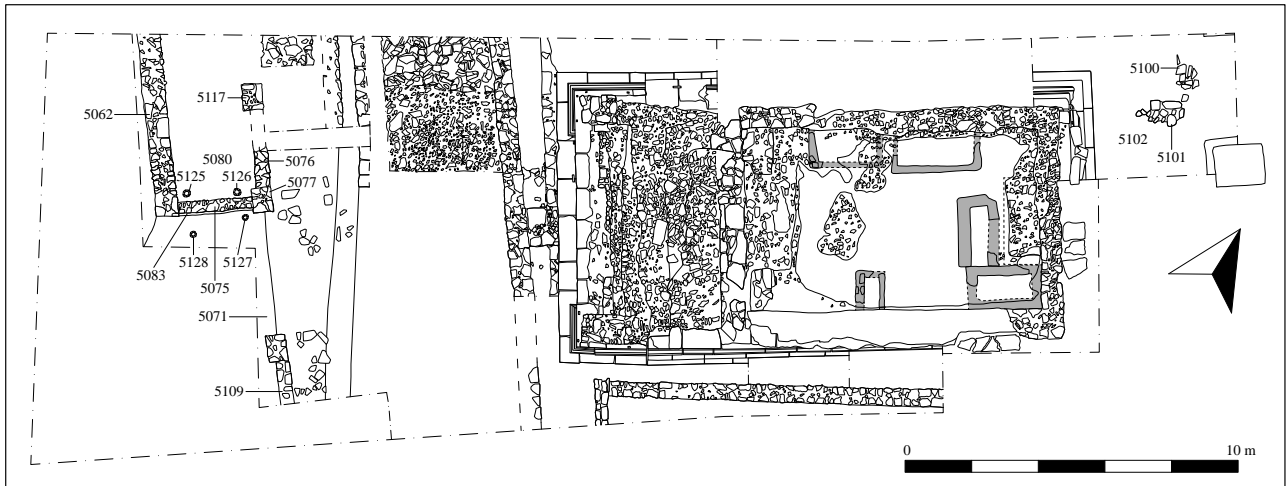


Figure 8.22. The Temple mausoleum, road and service building in Phases 4, 5 and 6 (mid-4th to mid-5th century)

also recovered, along with animal bone, a piece of marble waste probably from the construction of the mausoleum, a fragment of a marble inscription (SF 6631) and the base of a copper alloy statuette (SF 6625). It is unclear whether this deposit was ever covered by a more durable surface but a patch of smooth limestone slabs (5100) found just behind the mausoleum may suggest part of it was.

Phases 4, 5 and 6: late 4th to late 5th century

During the 4th and 5th centuries the Temple mausoleum would have remained a conspicuous feature on the plain. With its close connection to the Vrina Plain *domus*, the changing fortunes that this household underwent during these centuries would have been felt equally upon this monument and its surrounding buildings.

Physically the Temple mausoleum appears to have been maintained as a structural entity throughout this period (Fig. 8.22). Its state of repair may have waned slightly, a situation perhaps intensified following the earthquake towards the end of the 4th century, but as long as the *domus* remained occupied the mausoleum continued to be a prominent marker. As a result, the only signs of activity dating to this period found relating to mausoleum itself were restricted to the rear of the building. These consisted of a number of fragments of late 4th- to early 5th-century pottery found pressed into layer 5102, together with an east–west alignment of stones (5101) that may have formed the foundation of a rough wall, the western end of which would have presumably abutted the rear of the mausoleum (Fig. 8.23). Assuming layer 5100 was a stone floor surface, this must have been removed prior to the construction of this wall.

To the west, alterations carried out on the service building are clearer (Fig. 8.24). The colonnade fronting the building was partially blocked in by two well-constructed walls (5076 and 5109), the former located between piers 5117 and 5077 and the latter to the south of pier 5108.



Figure 8.23. East–west alignment of stones 5101 forming a possible wall behind the Temple mausoleum (1 m scale)

Measuring 0.45 m in width, the eastern sides of these blocking walls were aligned with the outer faces of the piers. The portico behind the colonnade was also subdivided by a third contemporary wall (5075), the eastern end of which was built against the inner face of pier 5077. This cross-wall was built within a construction cut (5083) that had been dug through a layer of dark-grey silty clay (5071/5080) which seems to have built up over the original floor of the portico.¹⁵ Four post-holes (5125, 5126, 5127 and 5128) found cutting 5071/5080 on either side of wall 5075 appear to have formed temporary supports whilst these alterations were being carried out. They may also have been used partially to support wall 5062, as mortar and rubble apparently from wall 5062 was found mixed into layer 5071/5080; this seems to imply the earlier wall may have been slightly damaged at this time. No internal floor surface was found sealing the backfill of the post-holes and assuming that the floor had not been removed at a later date, then it is possible layer 5071/5080 may have formed it. No pottery was recovered from either layer but a

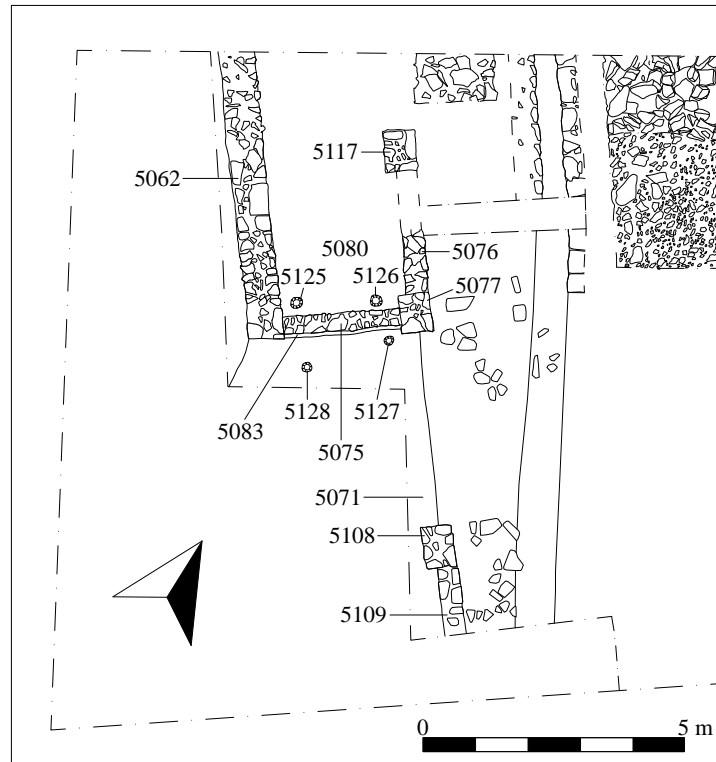


Figure 8.24. Plan of the alterations made to the area fronting the service building

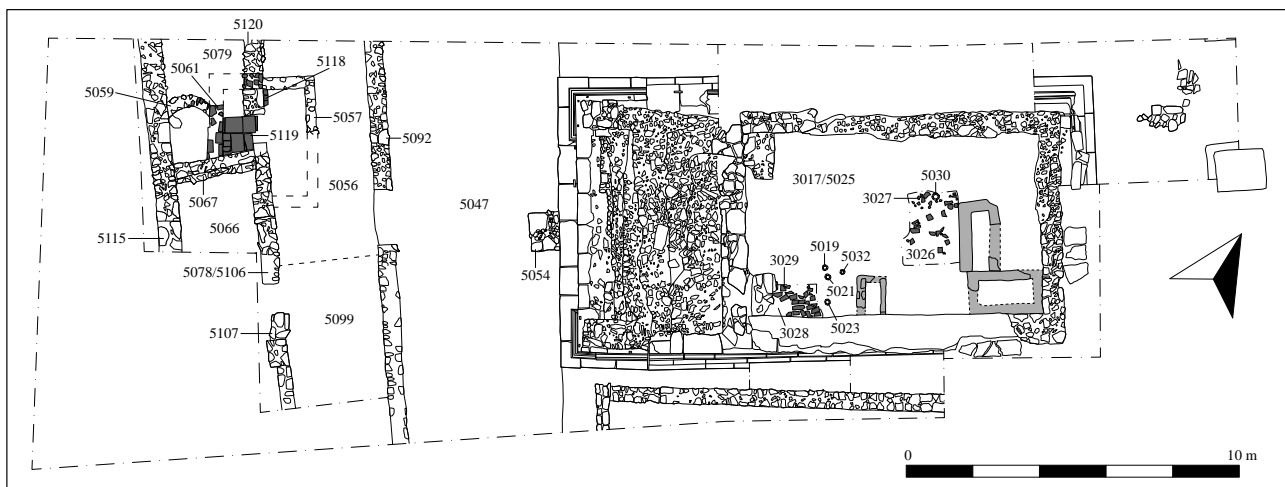


Figure 8.25. The Temple mausoleum, road and service building in Phases 7 and 8 (late 5th to early 6th century)

slightly flattened copper alloy ring (SF 6610) was retrieved from layer 5071.

How long these reorganised buildings were used for is unclear but as the occupation of the *domus* ended towards the middle of the 5th century it seems likely that these buildings were abandoned around the same period.

Phases 7 and 8: early to mid-6th century

There was renewed occupation of the Temple mausoleum and the general area surrounding it from the beginning of

the 6th century (Fig. 8.25). The road was resurfaced and a new wall, built with *spolia* from the surrounding buildings, was constructed along the western side of it. Beyond this, the eastern rooms of the former western service room of the *domus* were levelled over and two small, roughly built structures were erected over the line of them. The role of the Temple mausoleum was also altered.

Structurally the external appearance of the Temple mausoleum, although by now almost certainly in a severely deteriorated state when compared to its 3rd-century form, was still a major feature of the landscape at this time.

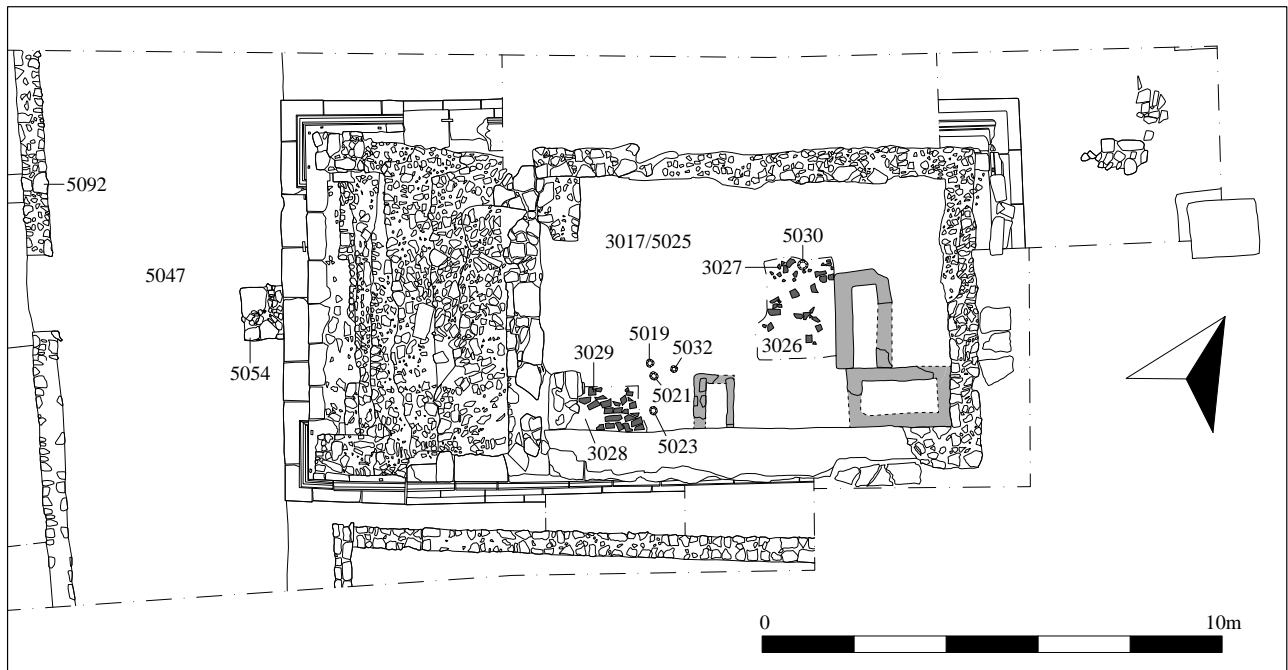


Figure 8.26. The Temple mausoleum in Phases 7 and 8



Figure 8.27. Detail of the tile floor 3027/3029 within the cella

Elements of the former mouldings around the building's podium were found reused in the walls of at least one of the new structures that sprang up around the building at this time (see below), but on the whole the shell of the building appears to have been intact. Internally, however, changes were made, with a number of the tombs in the *cella* appearing to have been smashed up and either removed from the site or simply stockpiled outside the building, possibly to be burnt later for lime. With the internal space partially cleared, the western end of the *cella* was now used for more domestic activities, as indicated by a thin occupation horizon (3017/5025) which built up over the *cocciopesto* floor of the structure (3016) (Fig. 8.26). Pottery recovered from layer 3017 dates this activity to the 6th century and included a rim of a 6th-century globular

Cretan amphora, along with a rim fragment of an Aegean Fulford Casserole 35 and a local cooking pot.¹⁶ Above this level, patches of a second roughly paved floor made up of broken tiles (3027/3029) set within a greenish-grey clay (3026/3028) were found (Fig. 8.27).¹⁷ At least twelve coins were found in this make-up level. The majority dated to either the early to mid-4th century or the late 4th/early 5th century but at least two of the coins, based on the thickness of the fabric, appear to date to the 6th century (SFs 5024/Cat. 505 and 5026/Cat. 402).¹⁸ Some form of wooden structure appears to have been set up in the southwest corner of the room at this time as the bases of four post-holes (5019, 5021, 5023, and 5032), each approximately 0.20 m in diameter, were found cut through the *cella* floor and the overlying occupation horizon. A further post-hole (5030) of similar diameter was found to the northeast, and it is possible that these posts, along with others in the room, formed partitions or other structural features.

Outside the building, the road in front of the mausoleum was resurfaced (5047) and a new retaining wall (5092) was built overlying the western edge of the earlier Roman road surface (Fig. 8.28). Wall 5092 was 0.50 m wide and was built with limestone blocks interspersed with occasional tile pieces. Much of this material seems to have been taken from the surrounding buildings. Fragments of a section of the *cyma recta* moulding from the podium of the mausoleum were also found reused as *spolia* within this wall. The wall does not seem to have been restricted to just this part of the road as the initial trial excavations in the drainage ditch (c. 18.60 m away) revealed a similarly built wall (1042) overlying a rubble layer (1197) that is thought to be a continuation of the initial Roman road surface (see above). Assuming that it is, then it would seem that this new wall

demarcated the entire length of the road and would have extended as far as the bridge, which must have remained the principal access route to Butrint from the valley.

The new road surface (5047) comprised a mix of small tile and limestone rubble and extended from the eastern face of the new western wall as far as the lower step of the mausoleum, in the process sealing the eastern road drain, which had by this time silted-up (5049). It is unclear as to when the capping overlying the drain was removed



Figure 8.28. View of the Phase 7/8 resurfaced road 5047 in front of the Temple mausoleum (2 m scale)

but at least one slab (5054) was left in place against the mausoleum steps. Located roughly central to the building, it would seem that this slab was deliberately left to form a point of access to the building. Along with 1st- and 2nd-century pottery, fragments of what appears to be an Aegean Fulford Casserole 35 dating to the late 5th/6th century were recovered from layer 5047.¹⁹ Three coins, two of which dated to the 5th/6th century (SF 6095/Cat. 461 and 6503/Cat. 462), were also found pressed into the surface, along with a copper alloy fibula (SF 6501) and two copper alloy nails (SF 6500 and 6601).

At the same time, the former service room of the *domus* was once again altered (Fig. 8.29). Initially the cross-wall 5075 associated with the 5th-century alterations to the colonnade was dismantled and the capping and upper blocks of the western drain walls (5070 and 5074/5113) were removed. Following this, the two areas either side of the former colonnade were then levelled over with a thick yellowish-brown clay silt. In the western area this deposit was recorded as 5079/5066 while to the east it was recorded as 5056/5099. Due to the softer nature of the area along the line of the western road drain a large quantity of rubble was mixed in with 5056.²⁰ As well as a mix of 3rd-century pottery, both layers also contained sherds dating to the 5th–6th century. A small building was then constructed over the area, but due to later robbing of the walls understanding the form of it is difficult (Fig. 8.30).

The northern and eastern sides of the building were

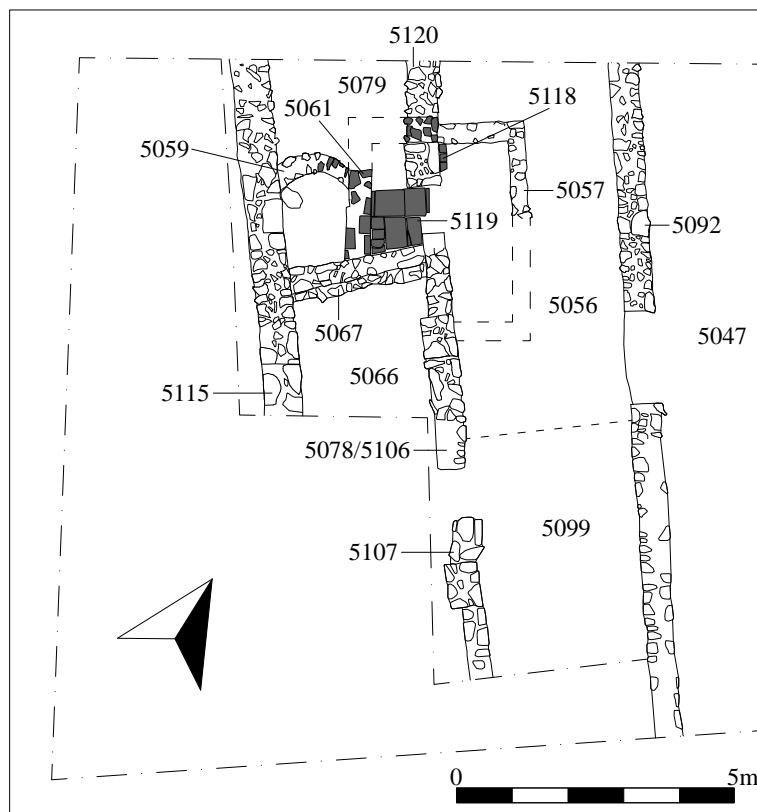


Figure 8.29. Plan of the alterations made to the area fronting the service building in Phase 7/8



Figure 8.30. View of the small building built within the colonnade fronting the service building

defined by wall 5057 (see Fig. 8.29). Built with tile, this right-angled wall had been constructed in a slight foundation trench dug through layer 5056. Towards its western end the north wall was built directly up against the northern face of pier 5117, which implies this earlier structure was incorporated into the new building; beyond this point wall 5057 had been robbed. However, a north-south-aligned tile wall (5061) located c. 0.55 m further on is thought to mark the western return of the building. At the southern end of 5061, a further wall (5067) was revealed. On a slightly different alignment to the other walls, this limestone-built wall extended between walls 5062 and 5076 and seems to have formed the southern limit of this part of the building. As there is no evidence that wall 5067 was built over the earlier Phase 5 blocking wall 5076, it seems this earlier wall remained standing and must have been integrated into the new building, possibly forming the southern return of the building at this point. The full extent of this southern end is unclear as later robbing has removed all signs of this end of wall 5057. It should be noted, however, that along the eastern side of the surviving part of wall 5057 the rubble element of layer 5056 was noticeably higher than elsewhere and extended to a point roughly in front of pier 5077. As this is c. 2.20 m beyond the southern extent of wall 5057, it is possible that wall 5057 originally extended this far with the rubble creating a firm surface around this side of the building. Pier 5077 would then have formed the southwestern corner of the building.

The integration of the earlier structures 5117, 5076 and 5077 divided the building into at least two rooms. Assuming the building did extend as far as pier 5077, the larger eastern room would have had internal dimensions of approximately 3.70×1.25 m while the smaller western room covered 2.10×1 m. Both rooms had a tile floor; in the eastern room this was made up of small square tiles (5118), some of which survived abutting the eastern face of pier 5117, while in the western room two large, complete rectangular tiles (5119)



Figure 8.31. Wall 5092, looking west, showing the position of the possible doorway later blocked by wall 5129 (2 m scale)

were revealed in the space between the southwest corner of pier 5117 and the eastern face of wall 5061. These tiles (5119) had been laid slightly overlapping each other and in order to fill the gaps at either end, two smaller rectangular tiles had been used. A doorway cut through the northern end of wall 5076 may have connected the two rooms.

As part of its initial construction, the building also seems to have included a small apsidal room located just beyond the western room. The curved northern wall (5059) of the room, built from a mix of tile and limestone, was constructed between walls 5062 and 5061. Using wall 5067 as its southern limit, the room measured 1.66×1.15 m internally. Covering the floor of the room was a layer of mortar (5072) that seems to have formed a preparation layer for an overlying stone pavement. Due to later robbing activity a limestone slab found against the eastern face of wall 5062, the outer edge of which followed the inner curve of the apse wall 5059, is the only surviving remnant of this floor.

Following the construction of this building, two sturdy walls (5120 and 5078/5106) were built on either side of the building following the alignment of the earlier colonnade (see Fig. 8.29). Wall 5120 abutted the northern side of wall 5057, while wall 5078/5106 was built out from the southern face of pier 5077. A third wall (5107) was constructed against the northern face of pier 5108 at this time. It is unclear how far wall 5120 extended as it continued beyond the limit of the excavation but it seems walls 5078/5106 and 5107 did not completely block the gap between piers 5077 and 5108 as an opening of c. 1 m was left between the walls, presumably to act as a doorway between the two areas now defined on either side of the walls.

The western door of the building defined by wall 5062 was also blocked in at this time (wall 5115). Whether this blocking completely closed off the doorway is unclear as the southern end of wall 5115 continued beyond the limit of the excavation, but it is possible it only narrowed it.

How this reorganised western area was accessed from

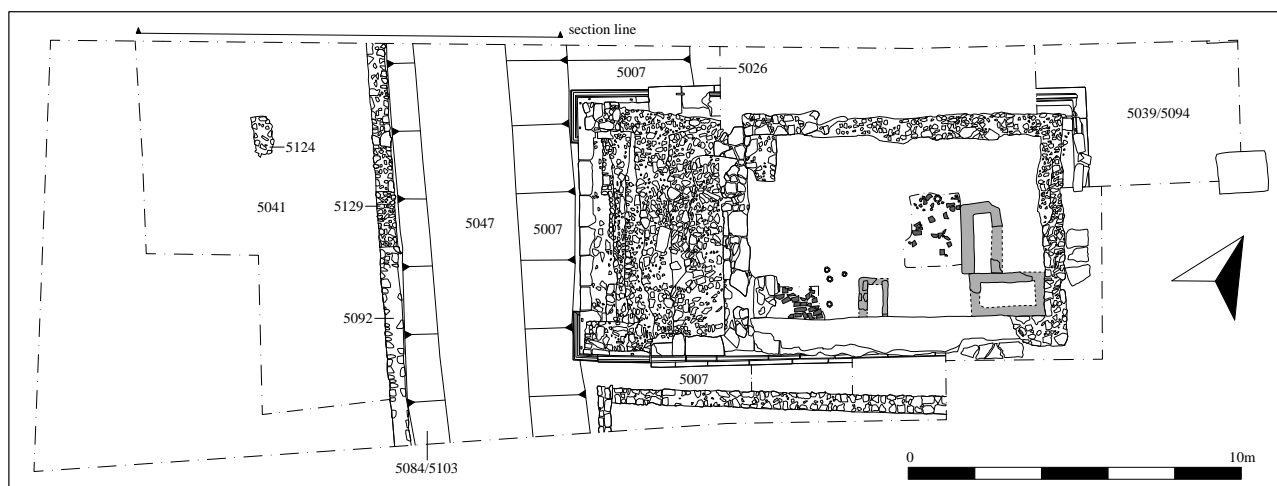


Figure 8.32. The Temple mausoleum, road and service building in Phases 9 and 10 (mid-6th to early 9th century).

the road is unclear. However, there is a possibility that a doorway had originally been incorporated into wall 5092, as approximately 4.45 m from its northern end the construction technique of the wall appeared to change from neatly faced rectangular limestone blocks of roughly equal size to more angular unfinished blocks of varying sizes, suggesting a blocking wall had been inserted at some point.²¹ This rougher walling (5129) extended for c. 1.70 m before the neater blocked walling reappeared and seems to have been built over road 5047, the surface of which appears to have partially extended through the door in wall 5092 (Fig. 8.31). When and why this blocking was added is unclear but it seems to have occurred prior to the succeeding Phases 9/10.

This reuse and the alterations carried out across the area once again bear direct correlation with events occurring to the west where, at the end of the 5th century, the earlier *domus* was reconfigured and a major Christian basilica built. The resurfacing of the main east–west branch road shows this road remained a vital link between Butrint and its hinterland.

Phases 9 and 10: mid-6th to early 9th century

This revival appears to have been short-lived, however, as by the end of the 6th century the buildings were deserted and the area was in decline. Over the next few centuries various rubble and silt deposits began building up around the Temple mausoleum and across the western buildings (Fig. 8.32).

The initial deposit found around the sides of the mausoleum was layer 5026/5039/5094, a thick greyish-brown silty clay containing a mix of late 2nd- to early 3rd-century ceramics as well as 6th-century pieces. Along all but the eastern side of the mausoleum this deposit was covered by layer 5007, a dark greyish-brown silty clay. This layer (5007) contained a range of ceramics including



Figure 8.33. The semicircular marble base (SF 5090) and lead sheet fixing, possibly for a statue, found within layer 5007 (5 cm scale)

3rd-, 4th-, 5th- and 6th-century material, as well as nine coins, of which the latest dated to the 5th/6th century (SF 5084/Cat. 457).²² A large amount of glass was recovered, with up to 67 individual vessels represented, along with a wide range of smaller finds including a ceramic loom weight (SF5241), two bone pins (SFs 5200 and 5202), a glass gaming piece (SF 5191), a copper alloy fibula (SF 5185) and pin (SF 5184), a copper alloy tool (SF 5183), various copper alloy nails (SFs 5086, 5187, 5188, 5190 and 5194) and copper alloy strips (SFs 5081 and 5189), a small pierced copper alloy disc, possibly a coin, which may have been used as an amulet/medallion (SF 5068), and some lead objects (SFs 5033 and 5079). Various fragments of marble were recovered including a number of sculptural pieces with relief decoration that are thought to be from the sarcophagi. A semicircular marble base (SF 5090) with a central hole partially covered by a lead sheet, which appeared to be a fixing possibly for a statue, was also found in this layer (Fig. 8.33). The quantity of glass and other small finds from layer 5007 is notable when compared to other Phase 9 and 10 layers in this area, and

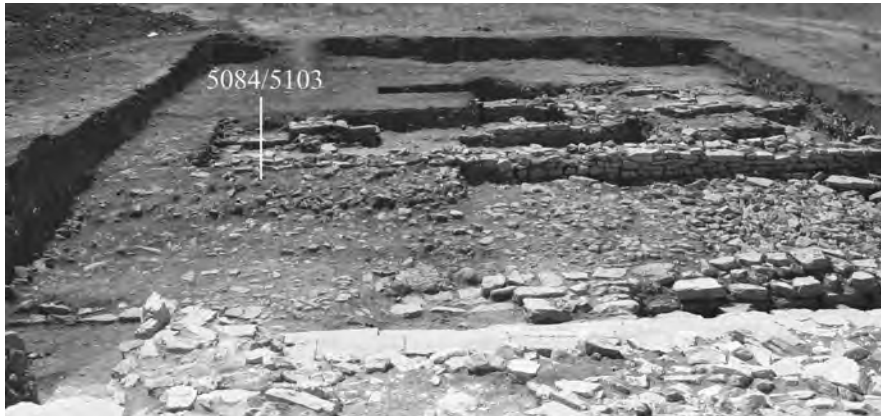


Figure 8.34. View of the road in front of the Temple mausoleum showing layer 5084/5103 banking up against the eastern side of wall 5092

when combined with the smashed pieces of sarcophagus it seems likely these pieces had originally been interred within the family tombs and were simply thrown away when the tombs were broken up. Layer 5007 sloped from east to west and partially spread out over the road, creating a slight bank along this side of the road.

To the west, the building built over the former service room seems to have collapsed soon after the abandonment of the basilica. A series of clay silt deposits (5081 and 5082) then built up across the area. Mixed in with these layers was a large amount of rubble. In layer 5082 much of this came from the destruction of the Phase 7/8 building, while the material from 5081, including a moulding from the mausoleum, derived from the collapse of the roadside wall 5092.²³ Overlying these layers was a mid-reddish-brown silty clay (5041). Containing frequent small tile fragments, this layer was found across the whole of this western area and appears to be from the collapse of the walls of the building defined by wall 5062; this implies the upper part of this building was built with *pisé* walls. Following the collapse of these walls the layer had been picked over to retrieve any useful building material and had then been spread across the area. Ceramics dating to the mid-3rd century retrieved from the layer, including the foot of an ARS 50 B/W datable to AD 230/240 onwards,²⁴ were probably pieces mixed into the wall matrix and date the construction of the building. A coin of Nero (AD 54–60) minted at Butrint was also recovered from this layer (SF 6543/Cat. 19). On the obverse of the coin was a depiction of the aqueduct, with water cascading from it (see Volume 6.2, Fig. 2.3).

The collapse from wall 5092 also extended along its eastern side (5084/5103), creating a small bank that spread 1.10 m across the surface of the road (Fig. 8.34). With low banks on either side, the road at this time would have appeared as a small hollow-way and as far as can be determined, would have remained as such for many centuries to come (Fig. 8.35).

A roughly built block of mortared rubble (5124) found against the southern face of pier 5117, and apparently built over layer 5041, indicates there may have been some attempt at occupation during this time. However, any other signs of this have largely been removed by the later truncation associated with the remodelling of the plain in the 1960s.

Phase 11: mid-9th to mid-10th century

The next major event to affect the area comprised the systematic demolition of the Temple mausoleum with the aim, seemingly, to recover as much of its valuable marble decoration as possible. This material was then broken-up on site before being taken away and most likely burnt to create lime. One method used in recovering this material can be gauged from the northern side of the building; here the standing wall was initially undermined by the removal of the facing slabs of the podium

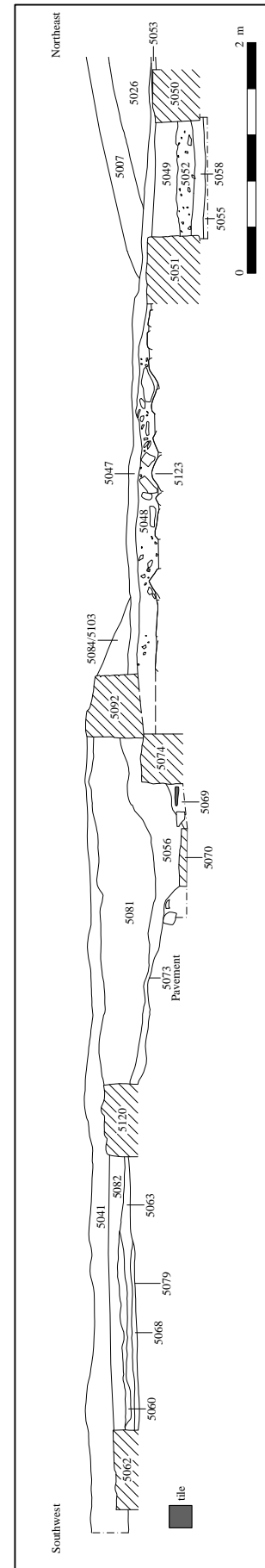


Figure 8.35. Southeast-facing section across the road and area fronting the service building showing the sequence of deposits infilling this area. See Fig. 8.32 for location

before a 0.40 m cut was made into the *opus caementicium* core to allow the wall to collapse (Fig. 8.36). This northern wall (5005) was found still lying where it fell, roughly 1 m away from the northern side of the building, with its coursing intact. As the objective of the robbing had been to gain the prize of the architectural marble, no attempt was made to carry away the bricks or other stones of this wall apart from those dislodged along its base. In order to facilitate the robbing, a rough stone surface (5034) was laid over 5026 and 5007 to provide a solid working surface for those involved in this operation.

On the southern side a different approach to the robbing was undertaken. Here, due to the presence of the pre-existing building, only the facing slabs were removed, and the *cella* wall was left standing (Fig. 8.37). Mortar, tile and limestone debris from the robbing soon built up along the narrow passage between the side of the building and wall 5016 and as the robbing continued, this became trampled down into a rough surface (5018). In time a second trampled layer built up (5017) (Fig. 8.38); again this deposit contained frequent mortar, tile and limestone debris from the robbing of the building. It also contained a notable quantity of glass with

at least 17 different vessels represented and various other small finds including two copper alloy needles (SFs 5091 and 5092), a fragment of a bone needle (SF 5099), two bone pins (SFs 5094 and 5180), the broken bowl of a bone spoon (SF 5095), a number of fragments of copper alloy (SFs 5096 and 5206), and a copper alloy animal paw (SF 5181), possibly from the base of a lamp. A very corroded 5th/6th-century coin (SF 5204/Cat. 459) was also found in this layer. The ceramics were 3rd century in date and largely comprised fine wares, amphorae and cooking pots. Such a quantity of broken glass and fragmented smaller finds suggests much of this material must have come from the tombs and fragments of human bone found mixed into layer 5017 seem to confirm this.

The staircase and side walls fronting the mausoleum were also removed at this time. A succession of silty clay layers subsequently built up over the lower part of the former staircase. The two lower deposits (5010 and 5009)



Figure 8.36. Detail of the collapsed wall 5005 along the northern side of the Temple mausoleum (1 m scale)



Figure 8.37. Detail of the robbing technique used along the southern side of the cella where only the facing slabs were removed. Note the iron grapples and fixing points

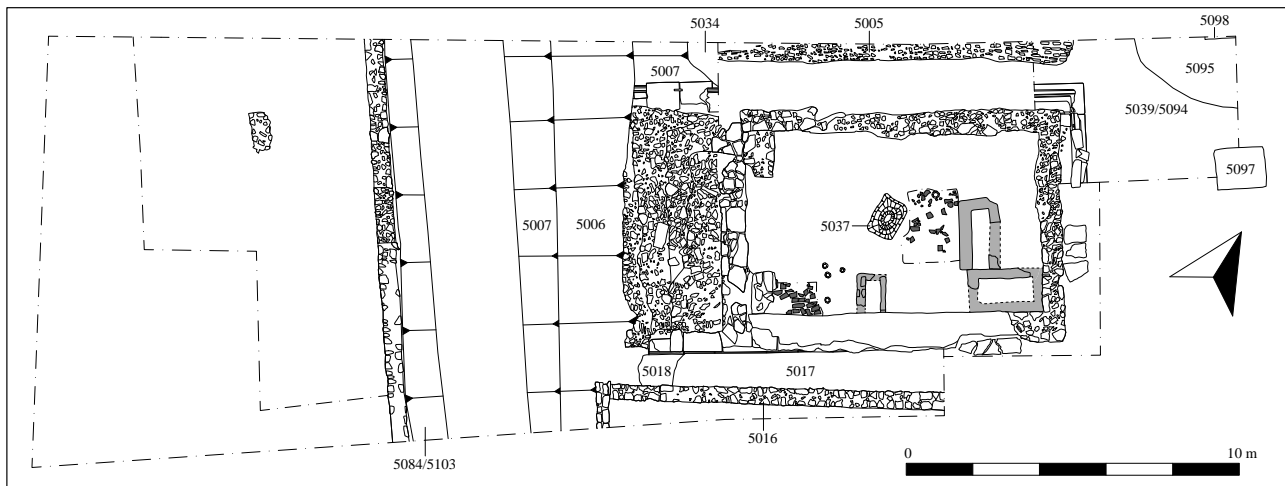


Figure 8.38. Plan of the deposits that built up around the Temple mausoleum during Phase II (mid-9th to mid-10th century)

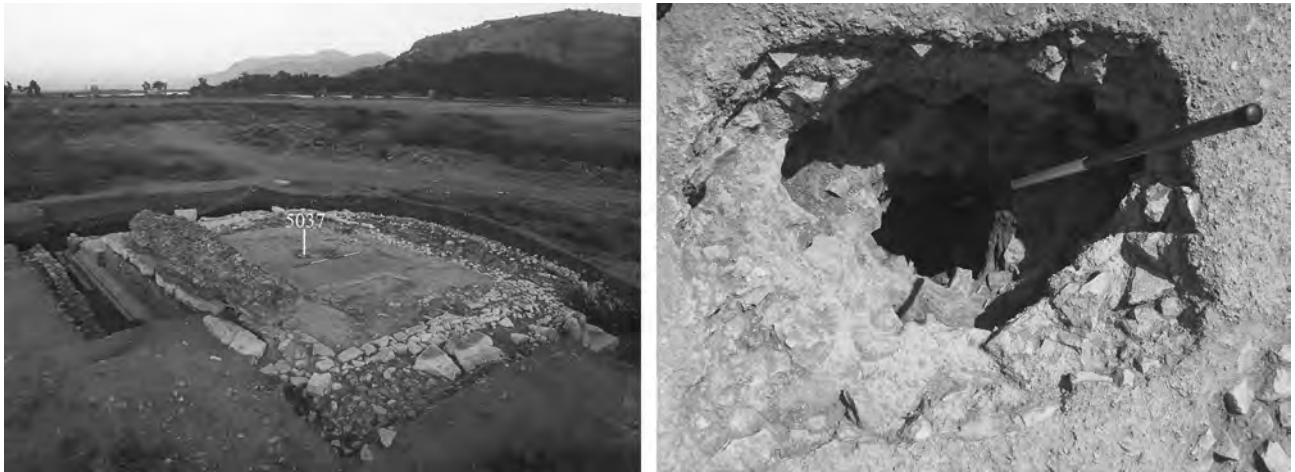


Figure 8.39. Location of the hole dug in the cella

appear to have derived from the collapse of the packing over which the stairs were constructed, while the thinner upper deposit (5006) was made up of material washed down from the robbed steps and included a large amount of limestone chippings from the destruction of the staircase and surrounding walls. Fragments of human bone from the smashed tombs were also recovered from this layer.

It is interesting to note that throughout the robbing there was no trace of the columns of the *pronaos*. A very small fragment of an Ionic capital that is thought to have topped one of them was found within layer 5009 (SF 5036) (see Volume 6.2, Fig. 6.69) but otherwise no actual column shafts were found, which seems to imply that some care was taken to remove these intact for use elsewhere.

It may also have been at this time that a deep, narrow hole (5037) was dug inside the *cella*, the cut extending 1.60 m through the solid mortar core of the temple podium (Fig. 8.39). The reason for this is unclear, but it is likely that looters, or the demolition team, were seeking treasure. Even in recent times in southern Albania a belief in the existence of treasure in old ruins was widespread amongst country people. During the civil unrest of 1997 a large hole was dug into the solid masonry foundation of the 16th-century Venetian tower in Butrint for similar reasons, while another was cut through the modern concrete foundation of a restored mosaic at Antigoneia (carefully avoiding the actual pavement).²⁵

At the same time as the demolition of the mausoleum, the arcade of the aqueduct located behind the building partially collapsed. A spread of bricks from the fallen arch (layer 5095) was found in and around pier 5098 (Fig. 8.40). Rather than being caused by natural events, the collapse occurred as a direct result of the demolition of the eastern wall of the mausoleum (5121) because when this wall was knocked over, the top of it smashed against the western face of pier 5097. The remains of this wall (5121) were found partially imbedded into layer 5094, with the eastern end of it lying against pier 5097 at a slight angle, having broken off from the lower part of the wall (Fig. 8.41).



Figure 8.40. Detail of the fallen arch bricks 5095 found around aqueduct pier 5098 and wall 5121 against pier 5097 (1 m scale)

Dating this demolition activity is difficult as the layers relating to it produced very few datable finds, while the technique of undermining ancient structures in this fashion seems to have been a standard way of demolishing buildings throughout the Middle Ages. There may have been some sporadic robbing activity following the abandonment of the basilica but it seems more likely that when attention was focused on the Vrina Plain once more with the establishment of the aristocratic *oikos* from the middle of the 9th century, this derelict structure would have formed a suitable source of building material at this time. If so, it could be argued that the systematic robbing of the building dates to this period. Indeed, part of a worked piece of Pentelic marble, thought to be from the Temple mausoleum, was found used in one of the walls of a new building constructed at this time in the aristocratic *oikos*, demonstrating that much of the stone being used was sourced from the surrounding buildings (see Chapter 7).



Figure 8.41. Northwest-facing section of the area behind the Temple mausoleum showing wall 5121 lying against pier 5097

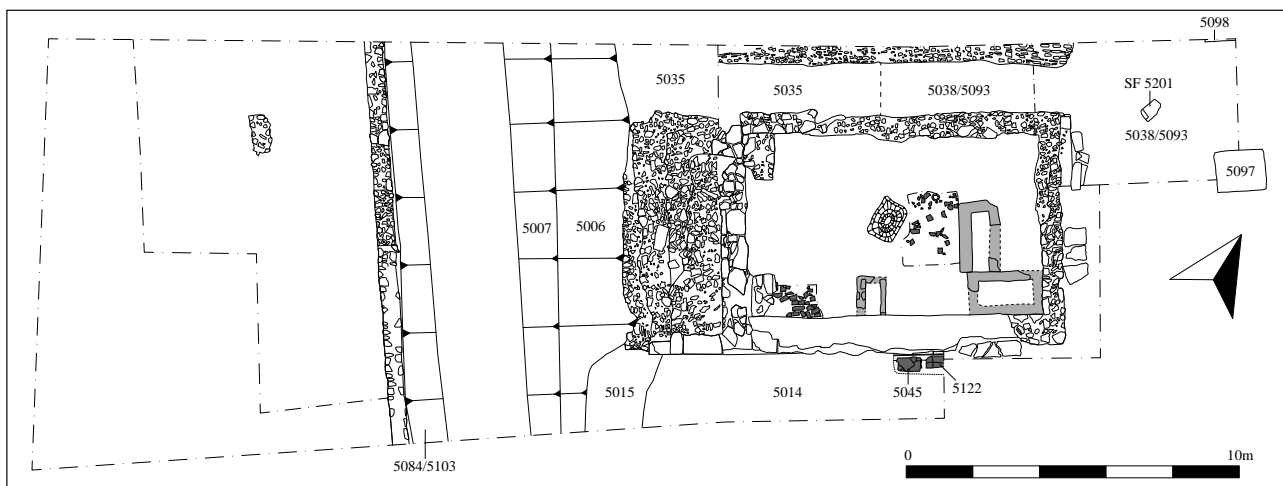


Figure 8.42. The Temple mausoleum, road and service building in Phase 12 (late 10th to 11th century)

Phase 12: late 10th to 11th century

How long this robbing activity carried on for is unclear. It may have been a single event carried out over a number of weeks or it may have been piecemeal and taken place over a number of generations. However, with the abandonment of the aristocratic *oikos*, this activity would have largely ceased and instead a series of thick deposits of silty clay built up over the area (Fig. 8.42). In the northeast corner the fallen eastern wall of the mausoleum and the arch of the aqueduct were covered by layer 5038/5093. Two decorated fragments from the lid of a large *kline* sarcophagus (SF 5201) were recovered from this deposit (Fig. 8.43). This layer also extended along the northern side of the mausoleum and, as layer 5035, covered the working surface 5034.

To the south, the passage between the mausoleum and

wall 5016 was infilled by layers 5015 and 5014.²⁶ The northern edge of these layers covered the area where the facing slabs of the podium had been removed, while the upper deposit (5014) also sealed the line of wall 5016 and the room beyond (see Fig. 8.47). Again these layers were full of smashed and broken fragments of marble including several pieces of *verde antico* veneer that would have formed part of the decorative scheme of the interior. A large amount of glass was recovered from both layers, with fragments of 17 different vessels found in 5015 and 16 in 5014, along with three bone pins (SFs 5087 and 5088 in 5015 and SF 5207 in 5014) and two 5th/6th-century coins (SF 5085/Cat. 458 in 5015 and SF 5198 in 5014). Layer 5014 also contained an interesting assemblage of fairly high-quality early to mid-3rd-century ceramics, including a number of Corinthian relief-moulded vessels, Pompeian



Figure 8.43. Location and detail of the decorated fragments from the lid of a large kline sarcophagus (SF 5201; layer 5038/5093) (5 cm scale)

red wares and eastern *sigillata* (Fig. 8.44). The presence of human bones again suggests this collection of items probably came from the smashed tombs.

Despite the destruction and removal of building materials, the memory of the sanctity of the Temple mausoleum appears to have remained as a small ‘*cappuccina*’ burial was found cut through layers 5014 and 5015 (Fig. 8.45). Placed against the robbed-out southern wall of the building, a curved *imbrec* tile (5116) formed the base of the grave while a larger rectangular roof tile measuring $0.80 \times 0.35 \times 0.03$ m (5045) covered it. Only a fragment of skull remained beneath the capping but from the size of the grave it seems it would have contained the body of an infant. Just to the east of this grave a second flat tile (5122) was noticed; this may have covered a further burial interred at the same time.

Phases 13–16: 11th century onwards

With the establishment of the aristocratic *oikos* within the ruins of the 6th-century settlement from the mid-9th century, the hollow-way once more formed an important link between the household and Butrint to the north and the Pavillas Valley to the south. However, a century later the importance of this route-way declined along with the aristocratic *oikos*, and as swamps and wetlands emerged over the succeeding centuries, the land fronting the Vivari Channel became inhospitable. With no traffic, the hollow-



Figure 8.44. Detail of a Corinthian relief-moulded vessel from layer 5014 (5 cm scale)



Figure 8.45. Cappuccina burial placed against the robbed-out southern wall of the Temple mausoleum and cut through layers 5014 and 5015 (1 m scale)

way gradually silted up (5042/5091) (Fig. 8.46); to the west this dark greyish-black silty clay layer sealed the remains of the roadside wall 5092, while to the east (as layer 5002/5004/5013/5029/5040) it extended around the sides of the mausoleum, sealing the remains of the collapsed walls and leaving only the plinth and part of the southern wall still standing as a testament to the structure (Fig. 8.47). In the space behind the mausoleum, layer 5029 was also found to cover a layer of rubble consisting of a mix of well-cut rectangular blocks together with smaller, rougher pieces. The mortar found around some of the blocks matched that of the surviving aqueduct piers, indicating that the archway, which had initially been weakened by the fall of the southern wall of the mausoleum, must have finally collapsed prior to the build-up of layer 5029.

Once more various fragments of marble, including elements of the decorative schemes from the sides of the tombs, were found within these layers, which suggests this material could still be found lying around the abandoned mausoleum for quite some time after its destruction.²⁷ A

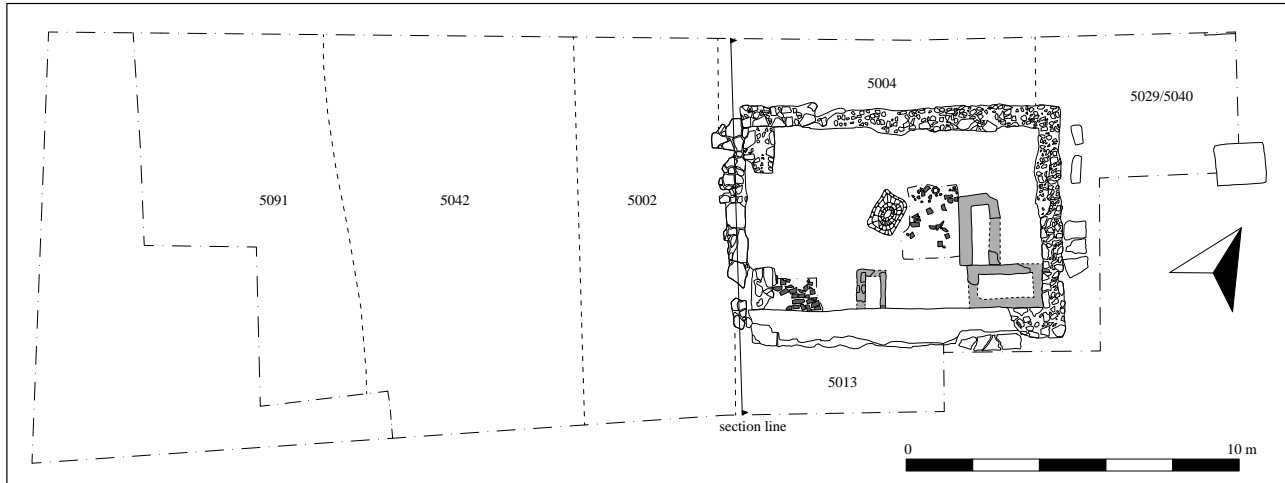


Figure 8.46. The Temple mausoleum, road and service building in Phases 13–16 (12th century onwards)

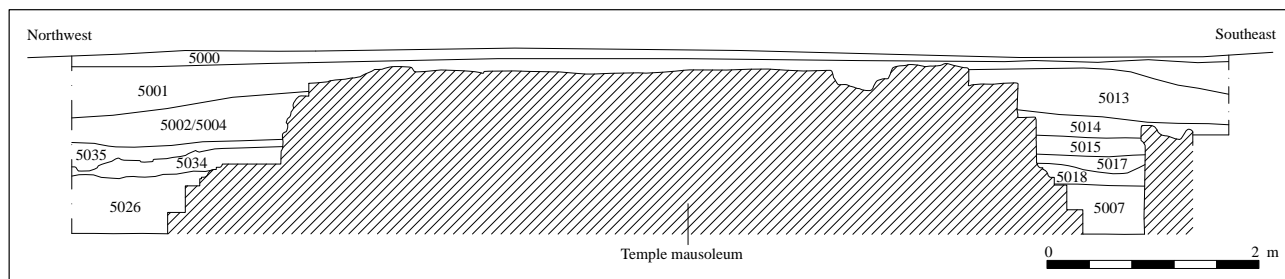


Figure 8.47. Section across the Temple mausoleum showing the build-up of deposits around the sides of the building. See Fig. 8.46 for location

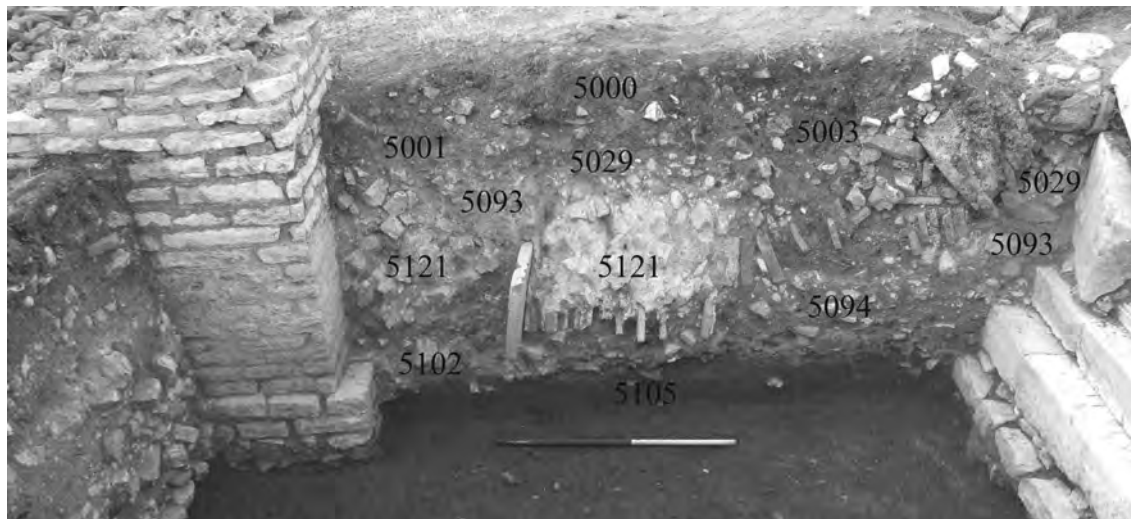


Figure 8.48. View of the northwest-facing section of the area behind the Temple mausoleum showing the sequence of deposits and the late cut infilled by layer 5003 (1 m scale)

fragment of *sgraffito* ware dated to the second half of the 15th century was recovered from layer 5004 and provides a *terminus ante quem* for this episode.

The build-up of these layers does not, however, signal

the end of the robbing activity, as it seems a further attempt was made at removing part of the surviving southern wall. A trench was dug around the side of the wall and along the outer face of the eastern wall, presumably to

see whether there were any further salvageable blocks below the surface of the ground. The up-cast from this digging had then slumped back into the cut (5003). Along the southern side of the cut many discarded triangular bricks from either side of wall 3020 were found mixed in with this layer, while to the east the base of the collapsed eastern wall of the mausoleum was found dumped within the layer, the cut having partially removed the western end of the wall (Fig. 8.48). Rather than being an ancient episode, the fact that the trench along the eastern side of the building was found to cut the green alluvial deposit (5001) and overlying topsoil (5000) suggests this occurred very recently.

Notes

- 1 A preliminary assessment of the monument was presented in Crowson and Gilkes 2007 (126–8), where it was simply called ‘the Temple’.
- 2 Çondi 1988.
- 3 Çondi and Hansen 2007, 128–31; Hansen 2013, 172–4.
- 4 This interpretation was suggested by Konstantinos Zachos.
- 5 There were no deposits relating to these walls as the excavation was unable to reach the lower depths due to the high water table.
- 6 A further pier of the aqueduct (1072/1073) was excavated c. 23 m to the northwest in the drainage ditch excavations (cf. Chapter 5, Fig. 5.32).
- 7 See Wilson 2013, 79.
- 8 See Volume 6.3, Chapter 7; cf. Wilson 2013, 95.
- 9 The line of the road had initially been traced for just under a 100 m during the geophysical surveys of the area in the 1990s (cf. Bescoby 2007, fig. 7.3); beyond this point it does not appear and it may be that the paving is restricted to only a small part of the road.
- 10 See Volume 6.3, Chapter 8.
- 11 See Hansen 2009, 45.
- 12 For a description of these two *kline* pieces see Çondi and Hansen, 128–30, catalogue numbers 2 and 5 and fig. 8.10.
- 13 Hansen 2013, 172–4.
- 14 See Volume 6.3, Chapter 8.
- 15 Construction cut 5083 was not excavated.
- 16 See Volume 6.3, Chapter 8. A corroded coin of Constantine I (AD 317–24) (SF 3394/Cat. 89) and of Constantius II (AD 355–61) (SF 5186/Cat. 168) were also recovered from these layers.
- 17 The true extent of this surface is difficult to gauge as the majority of it had been removed by the clearance work undertaken in the 1980s. It should be noted that within the make-up of the tile floor two fragments of an Apulian painted, ribbed amphora were recovered, thought to be medieval in date. These fragments may have become accidentally mixed in with this layer following the 1980s excavations. However, if they are from the make-up it could suggest that this floor surface is much later in date and may relate to the changes that this area would undergo in the following centuries.
- 18 The coins recovered from layer 3026 were SF 5024/Cat. 505, 5025/Cat. 168, 5026/Cat. 402, 5029/Cat. 106, 5037/Cat. 174, 5038/Cat. 196, 5039/Cat. 482, 5040/Cat. 194, and 5041/Cat. 197; while from layer 3028 they were SF 5070/Cat. 242, 5071/Cat. 360 and 5073/Cat. 93.
- 19 See Volume 6.3, Chapter 8.
- 20 Infilling the drain was layer 5111/5112/5069, a greyish-brown silt.
- 21 The distinction between these two possible phases of walling was only picked up during post-excavation work.
- 22 The earliest coin from this deposit was one of Nero minted in Butrint (SF 5203/Cat. 20).
- 23 At the time of excavation the deposit infilling the apsidal building (5064) and the deposits to the north of it (5068/5063/5060) were separated but it can now be seen these are all part of layer 5082.
- 24 See Volume 6.3, Chapter 8.
- 25 Pers. comm., A. Islami.
- 26 The consistency and colour of these two layers appears very similar and it may be that they are part of one action.
- 27 In layer 5002 (SF 5064) these included a number of fragments of dogs as well as figures in rapid movement and may have depicted scenes of either hunting, war or even Dionysiac celebrations (Hansen 2013, 173).

9 The Monument area

Sarah Leppard with Simon Greenslade

Introduction

The area known as the Monument was first investigated as part of the trial excavations undertaken on the Vrina Plain in 2002 (Fig. 9.1). Of the features exposed in the first season, the most intriguing was the discovery of two courses of well-hewn limestone blocks fixed together with iron clamps. Only a small part of this structure was initially found within the ditch so the area was widened

and the full extent of what became known as Monument 1 was uncovered. In 2003 areas to the southeast and northwest of Monument 1 were excavated (Fig. 9.2). These revealed an area of limestone slabs, potentially an earlier monument (Monument 2) or a precinct pavement, to the southeast of Monument 1, while to the northwest a later apsidal building was uncovered. In 2004 the southeastern area was extended further around the original 2003 trench,

Table 9.1. Summary of the Monument phases

<i>Phase</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Summary</i>
1	Mid-1st–early 2nd century	Roadway, building and smaller structure associated with early suburbs
2	2nd–early 3rd century	Phase 2a: evidence of use of area in form of either a paved precinct or early monumental structure – Monument 2 – built into early to mid-2nd century layer Phase 2b: Monument 1 built slightly over Monument 2. Monument 2 potentially used as pavement in conjunction with Monument 1. Monument 1 cut into a 2nd-century deposit with a late 2nd-century related occupation layer. Two votive boxes built along southeastern side. Monument 2 eventually covered over within this period
3	Mid-3rd–mid-4th century	Continued use of Monument 1 shown by occupation layers dated to early to mid-3rd century associated with the monument
4	Late 4th century	No dating for this period round Monument area
5	Early 5th century	Phase 5a: Rectangular building constructed beside Monument 1. Some industrial activity and drain added Phase 5b: Piers inserted in rectangular building, and possible second floor. Set of rooms built on northwest side of rectangular building, covering Monument 1. Possible portico added to building to southeast; drain covered by this time Phase 5c: Main room divided into two. Threshold inserted into northeastern wall; building extended to northeast Phase 5d: Central piers added to both main rooms giving extra support. Blocking walls built between portico piers. Further walls added to northwest creating possible store room containing large <i>dolium</i>
6	Mid–late 5th century	Possible abandonment due to environmental changes; rising water table
7	Early 6th century	Site reoccupied: small chapel built west of Monument 1, utilising walls of earlier buildings
8	Mid-6th century	Possible small alterations, addition of walls cut through floor of chapel
9–16	Late 6th century onwards	Abandonment of whole area; all deposits covering buildings are demolition layers; no further occupation or use of this area seen in archaeology



Figure 9.1. The Monument excavation area looking northwest towards Butrint

uncovering an area that measured c. 16 m by 11 m. This area was excavated to investigate Monument 2 further and to test whether part of the gridded *actus* road system on the plain ran to the northeast of the monuments and intersected a cross-road that ran from the northern side of Building 4 on the main excavation site.¹ While the earliest layers associated with the road could not be excavated due to the high water table, the excavation did, however, uncover a rich and interesting sequence of buildings surrounding the monument (Plate 9.1).²

Phase 1: mid-1st century AD

The earliest evidence encountered within this area prior to the construction of the monuments was at the western end of the drainage ditch where a road was located (Fig. 9.3). Aligned northeast–southwest, the surface of the road was made up of a sequence of compacted gravel deposits (1045/1046/1047). The southeastern side of the road was defined by wall 1087, whereas the northwestern side had been truncated by a later building indicated by foundation 1064 (see below). Although only a small area of the road was exposed it is thought the southwestern extent of it originally ran as far as the channel road (see Chapter 3), while to the northeast it continued as far as the road bridge across the Vivari Channel. The interpretation of the southwestern extent of the road is based on the alignment of wall 1087 which appears to match that of a robbed-out wall located beneath the floor of a room in the later bath-house associated with the Phase 4 *domus*. Assuming the road was 3.55 m wide, the position of the northwestern wall of the road also matches a second area of collapse in the same room (see Fig. 4.102).

A northwest–southeast wall (1088) located just to the east of wall 1087 may be associated with this phase. Built in a similar technique to the road wall and measuring the same width, wall 1088 was possibly a property boundary extending to the southeast of the road. Although the

immediate area around wall 1088 was not excavated, part of a rough floor surface (1095) made up of small angular limestone fragments was exposed 6 m to the southeast of it; it is possible that this floor and wall 1088 were connected in some way.

To the northwest of the road a second property may have been located as indicated by wall 1018 the alignment of which matched that of the road. Another possible contemporary structure (1017) was also identified just beyond this wall (Fig. 9.4). Due to 1017 having been severely truncated by the cutting of the drainage ditch, only the southern corner of this structure survived. The walls were constructed with bright orange-red bricks ($0.28 \times 0.16 \times 0.03$ m in size) that had been set in a hard, gritty grey mortar. The brick courses were generally set in paired headers but occasionally stretchers were introduced. Within the walls was a rubble and brick core. Both the walls and the core rested on a mortar foundation that had been built on top of a very dark-grey clay silt (1021). This layer contained late 1st-century AD ceramics, which provides a *terminus post quem* for the overlying building. Along the western side of the structure were the remains of a rough tile surface (1022). This external surface had also been laid over layer 1021.

Due to the limited survival of this structure its function is unclear. As the brick walls did not appear in the opposite side of the ditch it is assumed that the structure was relatively small (certainly its thin foundations would not have supported a substantial structure) and restricted to the area within, and almost wholly destroyed by, the 1960s drainage ditch. As such it may have been the base of a column or other honorific structure positioned close to the edge of the channel.

Phase 2: 2nd to early 3rd century AD (Fig. 9.5)

Phase 2a

The next phase encountered in this area of excavation was represented by a piece of masonry (1537) composed of large limestone slabs; measuring on average 1.35 m by 0.70 m and 0.25 m thick, these were bonded together with an orange mortar (Figs 9.6 and 9.7). These stone slabs were fairly irregular in shape compared to the blocks used in the later structure (see below), although very flat and smooth on their top surface. The slabs formed a roughly square shape and where they were missing from the centre, a rubble hard-core deposit (1550) was revealed. This deposit comprised abundant limestone fragments varying greatly in size and shape in a mix of orange and white mortar. In the northeast and southwest corners iron clamps with lead coverings were found clipping adjacent slabs together (Fig. 9.8). The existence of these initially suggested to the excavators that the feature was a monumental structure, and henceforth this structure was named Monument 2, although the real use of these slabs is still questionable (see below).³

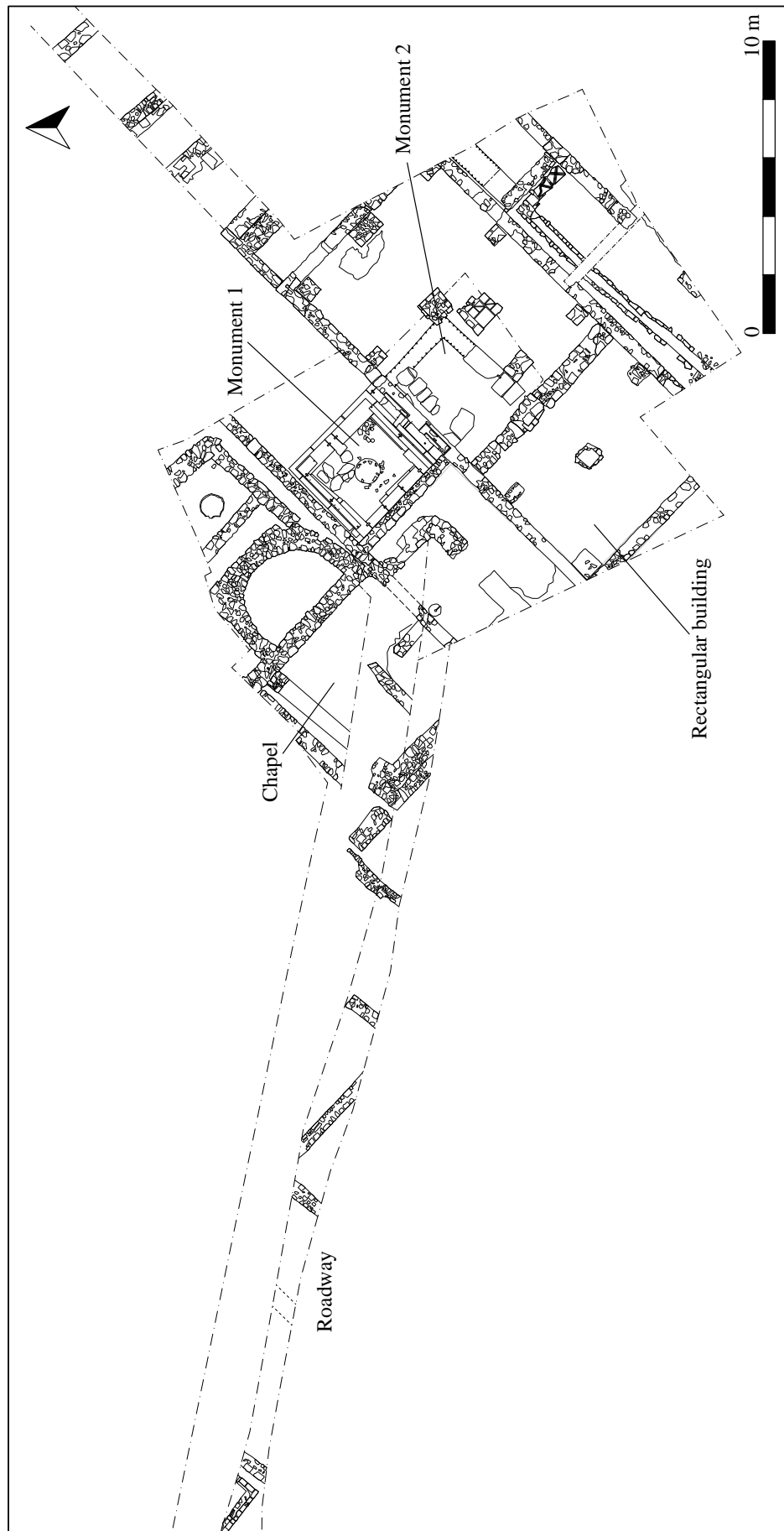


Figure 9.2. Overall plan of the Monument area

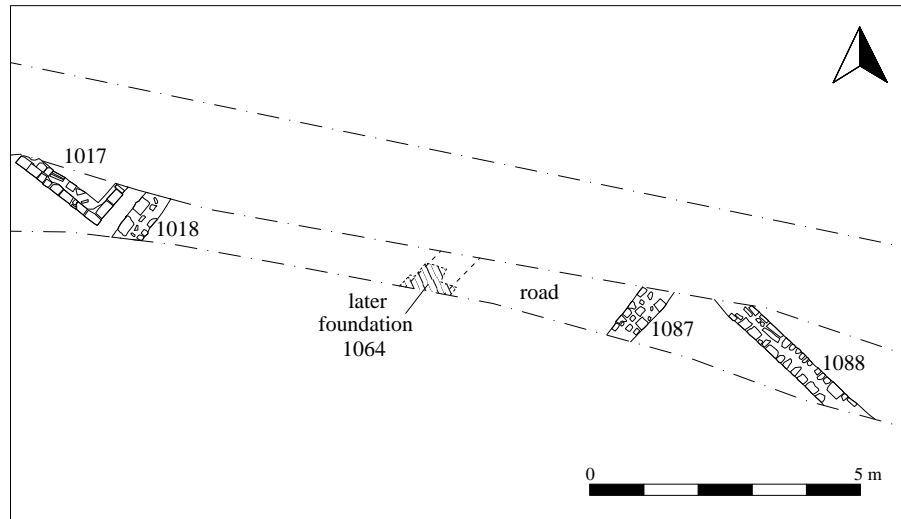


Figure 9.3. The mid-1st century features in the drainage ditch trial trench



Figure 9.4. Remains of structure 1017, tile surface 1022 and wall 1018 (1.60 m scale)

Along the east side and at the southeast corner the masonry (1546) had been robbed out at a later date, exposing more of the rubble hard-core.⁴ Due to the amount of robbing it was difficult to gauge the precise dimensions of this feature, but it seemed to be not quite square, measuring 3.75 m northwest to southeast by 3.50 m northeast to southwest.

Also, due to the intense robbing activity here, the real purpose of this feature is not so clear-cut as with Monument 1. While the iron clamps on two of the limestone slabs might suggest a monumental structure, there is no clear evidence of these slabs ever having a higher course of stones built upon them. Nor is there a lower course of stones below the visible slabs to suggest the exposed stones were the top course, and finally, the exposed stones were smooth and worn on their top surface, indicative of them having been used as paving stones for quite a period of time.

The excavations revealed two further deposits from this phase of occupation. Located just over 2 m to the northwest

of the stone slabs of 1537 was layer 1096, an orange-pink mortary deposit that was exposed in the first excavation of this area.⁵ Only a small area of this deposit was excavated, 1.70 m by just less than 1 m, as the excavation area was confined by the later walls. The deposit was fairly loose in nature and just 0.16 m deep; its mortar content and shallow depth suggests a surface of some type, while its lack of compaction suggests it had been severely damaged over time. Beneath this was a deeper make-up or levelling layer 1097; measuring 0.22 m in depth this was a compact clay deposit with plenty of limestone, mortar and tile fragments. The ceramics retrieved from the surface layer 1096 again date to the first half of the 2nd century AD.

Phase 2b

To the northwest of Monument 2 and in part abutting it, a very well-built limestone feature, Monument 1, was found (1037) (Fig. 9.9). Measuring roughly 3.70 m northwest to southeast by 3.50 m northeast to southwest, it was constructed of neatly cut rectangular limestone blocks which had been well dressed on their outer faces. Part of the foundation trench for this structure was located along its northeastern side (1525), cutting the earliest identified deposit in this area (1517) – an extremely compacted layer of grey clay up to *c.* 0.18 m thick dated to the first half of the 2nd century AD. Measuring *c.* 4 m in length, the foundation trench 1525 was only 0.14 m wide from the side of the structure and 0.32 m deep. It had steep, almost vertical, sides and a flat base which exposed the rubble footings of the monument to their entire depth. The cut contained a single backfill deposit (1526): a light-grey clay with occasional limestone fragments. Sealing this cut and potentially forming a surface for access to the monument was layer 1515. This deposit was excavated only on the northeastern side of Monument 1. It was a compact grey-green clay containing mortar lumps and occasional pieces of limestone and roof tile. It had an undulating surface with

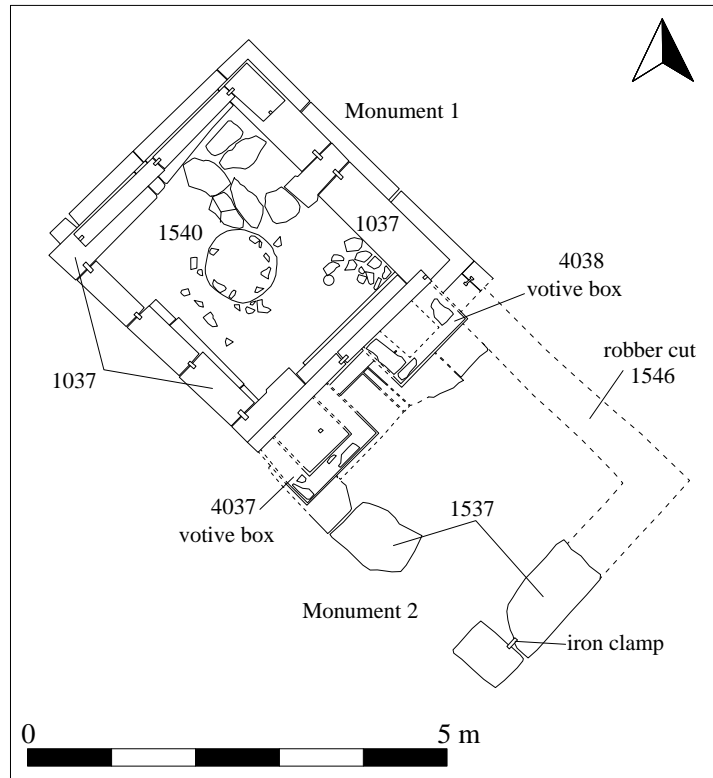


Figure 9.5. Plan of Monuments 1 and 2



Figure 9.6. View of Monuments 1 and 2 from southeast (2 m scale)



Figure 9.7. View of Monument 2 showing the robber cut 1546 that removed the masonry on the eastern side (2 m scale)

a maximum depth of 0.30 m. Ceramics from the deposit are dated to the late 2nd century and are consistent with those obtained from within Monument 1. Some fragments of amphora within this layer were of the same vessel type as one amphora which was uncovered *in situ* on the lower step of the monument (Fig. 9.10).⁶

A raft of mixed orange and white mortar and limestone lumps bound with solid mortar formed the base of the

structure (1540) (Fig. 9.11). Some three courses of the actual superstructure of 1037 survived. The lowest course formed the outer plinth; inset from this by c. 0.18 m was the second course, while only the northwestern and southeastern parts of the upper, third course survived as the areas to the northeast and southwest had been truncated by the line of the 1960s drainage ditch. This third course had been inset but only very slightly – c. 20 mm. This slight stepping of the structure appears to have been deliberate as even these visible edges had been smoothed off. This could clearly be seen where some of the upper courses were missing as the areas which would have been under the missing stones were still rough, as opposed to the smooth visible edge. As with Monument 2, iron clamps with lead coverings were found joining the slabs together (Fig. 9.12). The blocks varied in size and shape with upper courses measuring between 1.25 m by 0.20 m by 0.38 m to 1.50 m by 0.15 m by 0.37 m, whilst the second course varied from 1.65 m by 0.56 m by 0.25 m to 0.32 m by 0.56 m by 0.25 m. These variations may therefore indicate that these blocks are actually re-used.

Slightly offset to the west of the centre of the structure and set into deposit 1540, a distinct circle of slightly more

grey-coloured mortar measuring 0.85 m in diameter was located, edged with large pieces of limestone (Fig. 9.13).

Within the space defined by the main structure of Monument 1 and overlying 1540, a trampled layer of



Figure 9.9. View of Monument 1 from southeast



Figure 9.8. The iron clamp on the southwest corner stone of Monument 2 (1 m scale)



Figure 9.10. The remains of a 2nd/3rd-century Northern Italian amphora found on the step of Monument 1

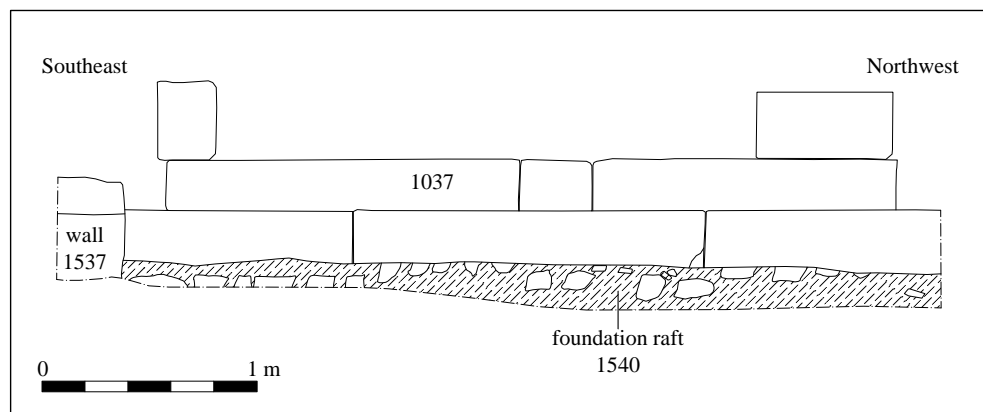


Figure 9.11. Elevation of the masonry 1037 of Monument 1 showing the rubble raft 1540

limestone chips and broken and damaged limestone blocks was found (1539). This material appeared to be waste from the rectangular blocks and suggests that the blocks used to construct the monument were brought and reworked on site;

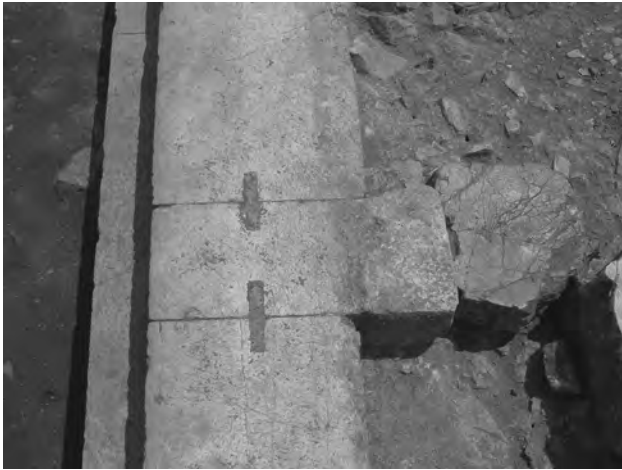


Figure 9.12. Detail of the iron clamps on the northeast side of Monument 1

the waste chips were left to form a hard-core level within the monument structure. From examination of the larger pieces it is clear that some blocks were broken whilst being shaped; these were then left or cast into the centre of the structure.

Up against the southern edge of Monument 1 and built over the stones of Monument 2, two small, rectangular, box-like features were found (Fig. 9.14). The western box (1038/4037) measured 0.90 m by 0.40 m by 0.20 m and was constructed out of limestone fragments bonded in an orange sandy mortar. It had been plastered and painted white both internally and externally. A dark-grey deposit with occasional charcoal and shell fragments (1033) was found infilling it; the ceramics from this deposit date from the mid-2nd century AD. Some 0.60 m to the east was the second box (4038), which measured 1.05 m by 0.20 m by 0.24 m. This was constructed in a similar manner to 1038/4037 and had been plastered and painted externally. While the connection between the western box (1038/4037) and Monument 1 had been lost, the western edge of box 4038 was found abutting the second course of the structure and overlying the structure's plinth (1074).

The two boxes were built on the flat slabs of Monument 2, suggesting that if this had been a structure, it had been



Figure 9.13. The circular impression in the mortar at the base of Monument 1 (1 m scale)



Figure 9.14. Detail of the plaster-lined votive box 4037 later incorporated into wall 1537

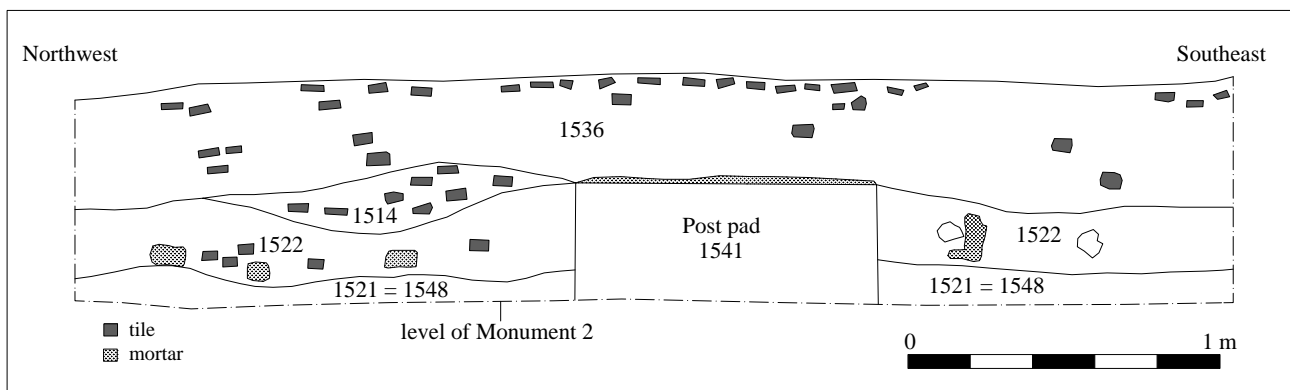


Figure 9.15. Southwest-facing section showing the layers covering Monument 2

demolished down to this level by this time. These boxes, which appear to have been freestanding, may have been used as places to deposit votive objects or offerings, as small altar bases, or perhaps they contained small statues or artefacts.

To the south of Monument 1, within the trench that ultimately uncovered Monument 2, a deposit of mottled brown-green grey silt (1521/1548) was found to infill the area, sealing the remains of the earlier feature (Fig. 9.15). This deposit contained a large amount of charcoal along with small fragments of tile and was spread across the whole of the excavated area. The ceramics recovered from this deposit have been dated to the early 2nd century AD. This deposit appeared to be an occupation layer associated with Monument 1 that ultimately sealed the earlier masonry 1537. Perhaps it was necessary at some point in the latter half of the 2nd century to level-up the area around the monument and levelling material was bought in, thereby mixing deposits from earlier levels.

Discussion

The 2nd century AD was a period of expansion on the Vrina Plain, with new construction works being undertaken. As part of this expansion, in the first half of the 2nd century an area fronting the main road from the city of Butrint across the Vrina Plain to the Pavillas Valley was developed as a potential public space with perhaps a paved precinct or monument. Towards the end of this century the area had been aggrandised with a large monumental structure of well-cut stone, Monument 1, constructed with a central column erected upon it.

The role of the feature known as Monument 2 is not conclusive. As discussed above, it is only due to the survival of two iron clamps that this feature was named as a monument. It may well have been a precursor to Monument 1, built with a lower quality of workmanship, which Monument 1 then replaced as an aggrandised version. The superstructure of Monument 2 may have been removed, leaving the lower courses of slabs at a level matching the base of Monument 1. These smooth slabs of stone (1537) may then have acted as a paved area or precinct along the southern edge of the main monument, but the area was covered by an occupational deposit. Alternatively the slabs were originally part of a paved area that continued in use when Monument 1 was built. The amount of wear on the slabs indicates a long period of use, and since they appear to have been covered by an occupation layer (1521) soon after Monument 1 was constructed, it seems more likely that the slabs were already part of a paved area in the first half of the 2nd century AD.

During the latter part of the 2nd century the area was aggrandised with the addition of an impressive monumental structure. The quality of stone workmanship on Monument 1 is very high and the use of iron clamps sets it apart from any other contemporary structures found on the Vrina Plain. Due to the amount of modern truncation seen on

Monument 1, assigning a role to it has proved difficult,⁷ but the circular impression at its base suggests it was originally the base for a freestanding column. On the basis of its size, the high quality of the workmanship, and the potential central column, Monument 1 may well be the remains of an honorific column. The structure is located on a slight rise on the Vrina Plain and would have been clearly visible from the city of Butrint: a perfect location for a tomb or memorial.⁸

Also during the latter part of the 2nd century, and probably contemporary with the construction of Monument 1, two so-called 'votive boxes' were built along the southern edge of Monument 1. These two boxes were constructed on top of the slabs that remained of Monument 2 and originally would have been freestanding. The boxes respect the edge of Monument 1 and the eastern box is constructed upon the lower plinth of the monument. With plaster lining the internal and external surfaces of the two boxes, they clearly held an important function. As they were freestanding, potentially on a precinct pavement besides the monument, this shows they were accessible. If these were indeed built to contain votive offerings, perhaps the honorific monument later changed its role and became an altar base.

Dating evidence for these structures is quite limited. The earliest deposits reached in this area were 1517, into which both structures were constructed, and 1096, which unfortunately cannot be physically related to either structure. The ceramics from these deposits date to the first half of the 2nd century. The occupation level (1515) sealing the construction cut for Monument 1 dates to the second half of the 2nd century, with a further occupation level that covered the remains of the paved precinct or Monument 2 containing ceramics from the first half of the 2nd century.

Phase 3: mid-3rd to mid-4th century AD

The major alterations seen in the western area of the former suburb at this time, with the construction of the large *domus*, do not seem to have any effect on the monumental area; rather Monument 1 appears to have remained as a testimony to the previous era to anyone visiting the *domus* owner. The area to the northwest of the monument was, however, altered, with the road being abandoned and a thick greyish-brown silty clay (1026), which contained a large amount of demolition material including a noticeable quantity of painted plaster, dumped across it. A similar deposit (1032) was spread across the area to the southeast of the road wall 1087.

Beyond this, the floor surface 1095 was similarly levelled over. Directly above the surface was 1069, a deposit of dark-brown clay silt, 0.16 m thick, containing substantial limestone masonry fragments and tile pieces. This, in turn, was covered by another rubble deposit (1078) that contained more substantial inclusions. Like 1069 this layer was relatively shallow, measuring only 0.17 m deep, but it was much sandier and contained many more mortar lumps.

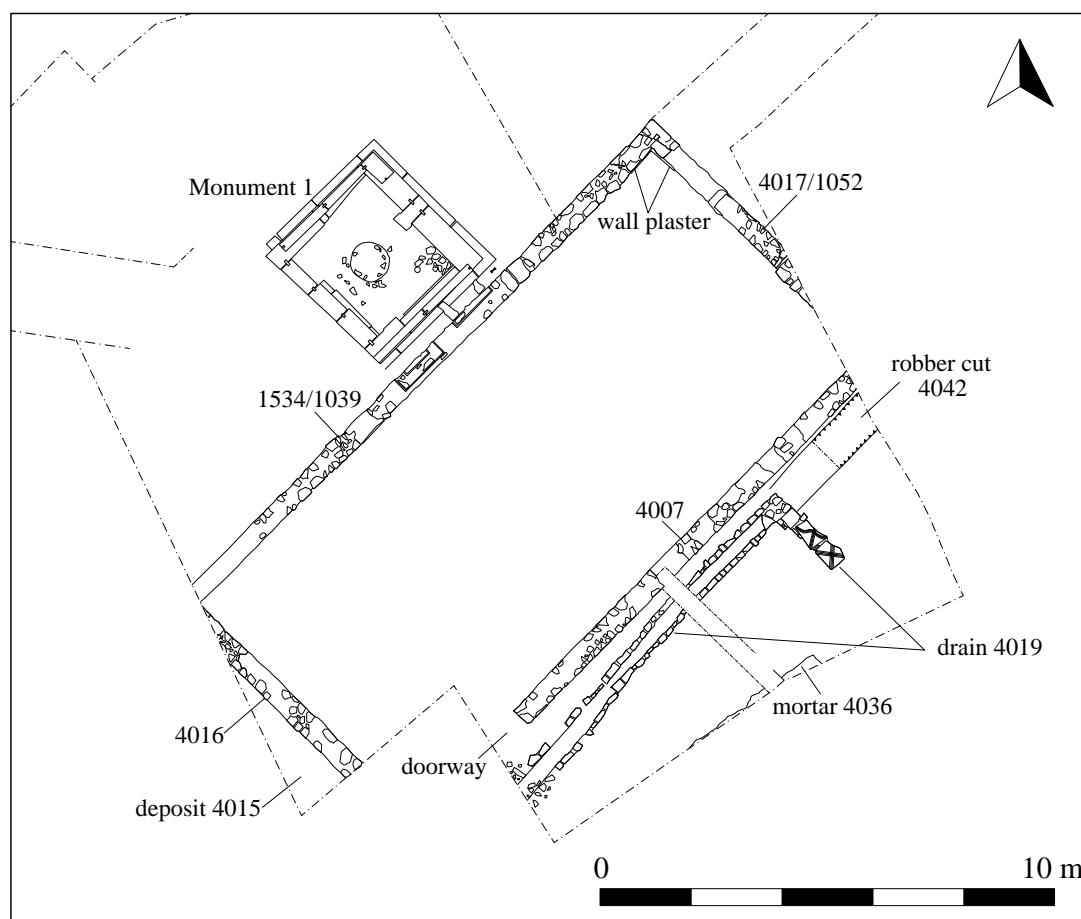


Figure 9.16. Plan of the Phase 5a rectangular building

The area around the brick-built structure 1017 to the northwest of the road also seems to have been levelled over at this time, as indicated by a very dark-grey silty clay (1015/1016) 0.15–0.24 m thick. Mixed in with this layer was a large amount of mortar, the composition of which matched that used in 1017, suggesting this structure itself may have been demolished. Many fragments of both bricks and masonry blocks, along with lumps of tile and stone rubble-core from the upper levels of the building, were also found in the deposit.

These layers contained ceramics dating to the 2nd and 3rd centuries, much of which was worn and abraded. Layer 1015 also contained some early/mid-3rd-century pieces. Other finds from these deposits included glass and animal bone, as well as an almost complete copper alloy cosmetic spoon from layer 1032 (SF 2371). Pieces of slag and a crucible were also recorded from layer 1026.

After these layers were deposited it seems some form of building was constructed over the northern side of the former road, as indicated by foundation block 1058/1064 (see Fig. 9.3). Cut through layer 1026, this block of material consisted of a series of mortar layers 0.31 m thick. At the base of the foundation was a bedding of limestone and roof tile fragments. Above this was a band of pinky-yellow sandy mortar with pebbles and tile fragments. Two further

horizontal mortar layers were successively added, each containing small pebbles and fragments of tile. The layers were all compacted and produced a few pieces of painted wall plaster and occasional pottery sherds spot-dated to the late 2nd to early 3rd century. Overlying the foundation was a narrow (50 mm) band of levelled and compacted gravel (1057), which in turn was overlain by a poor *cocciopesto* surface (1056) (40 mm thick). The southeastern wall of the building had been removed at a later date, while the northwestern extent of the foundation was not exposed. Due to the limited area exposed it is difficult to interpret this building, but it should be noted that since pottery found on the top of 1056 dates to AD 500–50, it appears it lasted for some time.

Phase 5: Early 5th century AD (Plate 9.2)

Phase 5a (Fig. 9.16)

Directly along the southeastern line of Monument 1, a large rectangular structure was built which sealed Monument 2 below it. The part of the building uncovered in excavation measured 16 m northeast–southwest by 7.40 m northwest–southeast; the building continued further on beyond the southwestern limit of the excavation (Fig. 9.17). The



Figure 9.17. View of the rectangular building, looking to the southwest (2×1.60 m scale)

northwestern wall of this building (1534/1039), which was built with irregular limestone blocks bonded by a mixed yellowish pinkish-white mortar with gravel inclusions, cut through the surface layer 1515 associated with Monument 1. The stones were evenly coursed but roughly finished. The extent of this wall that was uncovered measured 14.50 m in length and was 0.47 m wide; it remained standing to a height of 0.70 m. This wall was built in part over the line of Monument 2 (1537) and also incorporated the 'votive boxes', thereby preserving them. This wall seems to respect and be aligned on the axis of Monument 1 as a consistent gap 0.25 m wide exists between the northwestern edge of wall 1534/1039 and the southeastern side of the monument. At its northeastern end the wall turns to the southeast as wall 4017/1052, which formed the northeastern wall of the building. Measuring 4.20 m by 0.47 m and standing to a height of 0.40 m, wall 4017 had been constructed out of roughly rectangular unfinished limestone blocks, bonded with a pinkish-white coarse mortar with gravel inclusions; three courses of stone remained. The junction of this wall with the southeastern wall 4007 was beyond the eastern limit of the excavation. The extent of the southeastern wall of this building that was uncovered measured 10.70 m in length and was 0.47 m wide; it survived to a height of 0.28 m. It had been constructed in a similar manner to wall 4017, with rough rectangular limestone blocks in a pinkish-white, gravel-flecked coarse mortar. Roughly 0.45 m from the southwestern baulk the wall appears to have stopped in a doorway, allowing access into the building, as indicated by the use of horizontal rectangular limestone slabs at this point in the wall. At the southwestern limit of the building a further northeast–southwest-aligned wall was located (4016), measuring 5 m in length by 0.45 m wide and surviving to 0.10 m in height. Although constructed using the same technique as the main, outer walls of the structure, this wall was slightly narrower and appears to form a division wall within the structure as a whole. As such this would have created a main northeastern room



Figure 9.18. Drain 4019 running along the southeast side of the rectangular building (1.60 m scale)

measuring 14 m northeast–southwest by 7.40 m northwest–southeast. Indications are that the walls of the building would have originally been plastered, as fragments of wall plaster were found adhering to the northeastern corner and on both sides of the division wall 4016. Fragments of painted wall plaster were also recovered from some of the levelling layers inside the building.

Only a small area within the rectangular building was excavated to any depth due to time constraints, and the depth of the excavation was governed by the high water table in later seasons. At the southwestern extent of the excavation area, signs of industrial activity were noticed in the deposit to the southwest of wall 4016. This deposit (4015), a dark-brown and black silt with extensive signs of charcoal and burning, was excavated to a depth of 0.11 m. Recovered from the deposit was a fair amount of slag and some pot wasters, suggesting the deposit came from a nearby kiln or industrial works. Unfortunately it was not possible to investigate further to determine whether this room was used for an industrial activity in this phase, or if the deposit had been brought in from nearby as a levelling layer.

Directly to the southeast of the rectangular building the remains of a well-constructed drain were uncovered (4019), set c. 0.25 m out from wall 4007 and running roughly parallel to it (Fig. 9.18). The drain, which measured 0.60 m in width and 0.22 m in depth, was constructed from bricks set within a pinky-orange mortar. The drain had been cut through a mid- to light greenish-grey silt deposit (4035/4044) which sloped slightly from west to east. This deposit appeared to be a general levelling deposit, presumably to raise the area up against the rising water level, which appears to have been a problem in this area as below the levelling deposit 4035 fragments of what appeared to be an earlier mortar floor were found (4036). This floor was only identified up against the edge of the southern limit of the excavation so it is unclear what it relates to. Potentially it may indicate that the rectangular building continued to the south, with a further range of rooms in this area; equally it may be the floor for an earlier building that could have been related to the central monuments. It appears that originally the drain would have run the length of wall 4007 but very soon after it was built

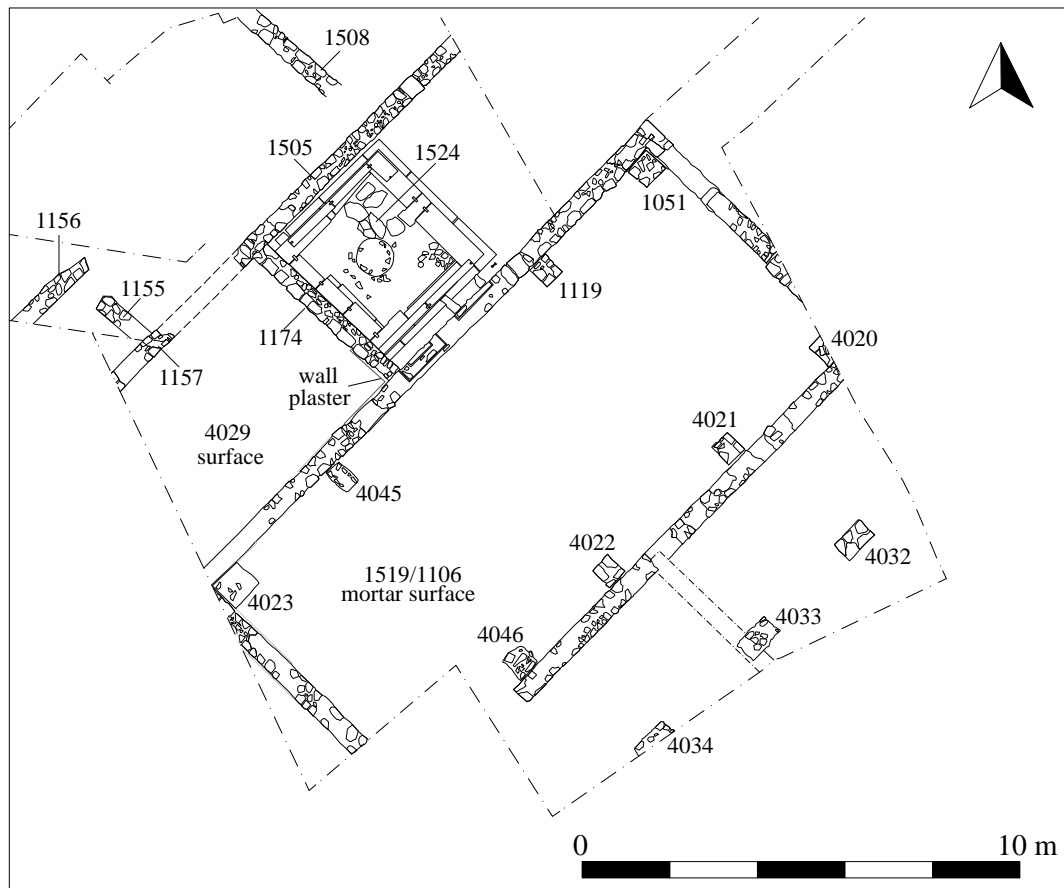


Figure 9.19. Plan of the Phase 5b rectangular building

it was altered and the northeastern end was removed, as shown by cut 4042 which was backfilled with deposit 4043.⁹ The new northeastern limit of the drain was then altered by the addition of a northwest–southeast-aligned drain which was traced for 1.80 m. Indentations in the degraded mortar floor deposit (4036) seemed to show that the drain could have continued up to the southern limit of the excavation. Unlike the rest of the drain, where the capping stones had been removed, the remains of two large, broken 70 mm thick floor tiles were found *in situ* at the southeastern end of this right-angled drain. The tile base of the drain also survived at this point, unlike elsewhere where it too seemed to have been removed.

Phase 5b (Fig. 9.19)

It is unclear just how long the rectangular building functioned in this open-plan form and there is substantial evidence that a number of changes occurred to its layout soon after it was built. Structurally, the most noticeable are several small masonry piers or buttresses that were constructed against the inner plastered faces of the northwestern and southeastern walls and cut through the earlier floor or make-up deposit 1521/1548 (Fig. 9.20). The pier in the northern corner (1051) measured 0.60 m by 0.65 m and was constructed with a mix of rectangular



Figure 9.20. Pier 1051 in the northern corner of the rectangular building (20 cm scale)

and irregular rough limestone blocks and tile fragments set within a light sandy-yellow mortar. Roughly 2.65 m to the southwest, another pier (1119) was located, constructed in the same manner as 1051 but slightly smaller at c. 0.60 m by 0.50 m. Just over 6 m further to the southwest, a further pier (4045) was located, although this had been severely truncated along its northeastern edge and measured only



Figure 9.21. View of the three piers to the southeast of the rectangular building (2×1.60 m scales)

0.65 m by 0.35 m. The pier in the western corner of the rectangular building (4023) was built at the junction of wall 1534 and the division wall 4016; again it was of the same construction as the other piers. Four corresponding piers were uncovered along the southeastern wall of the building. The pier in the eastern corner 4020 measured 0.60 m by 0.46 m; this base carried on beyond the eastern limit of the excavation but would appear to have been located at the junction of the northeastern and southeastern walls, thereby mirroring pier 1051 in the opposite corner. Located c. 2.65 m southwest of this was pier 4021, measuring 0.60 m by 0.53 m. Two courses of this pier were visible and there seemed a very definite pattern in the construction, with alternate limestone then tile layers which may have followed throughout its build. This pier was set opposite pier 1119. The next pier, 3.40 m to the southwest, was 4022; this measured 0.60 m by 0.50 m and did not appear to have an opposing pier on the northwestern wall. However, as this area of the excavation had been truncated by the 1960s drainage ditch, it may have been lost. Beyond pier 4022, evidence for the next pier was limited. Roughly 2.50 m to the southwest of 4022 an area of rubble (4046) was noticed in plan which seemed to conform to where the next pier should have been. Due to the disturbed nature of the deposits at this point, it may suggest that this pier had been robbed. Associated with these piers was deposit 1519/1106, a compact yellow mortar layer seen abutting the piers in the 2003 trench area excavated around Monument 2. This deposit measured between 0.05 m and 0.29 m in depth and most likely represents the floor surface of this phase. Underlying 1519 was a compact layer of grey silt (1518) that was thought to be the make-up for the overlying floor.

The reason for these piers might be an enlargement of the rectangular building with the addition of a second storey. The piers would have been a necessity to support a second storey as the insubstantial load-bearing outer walls of the original building would not have been adequate.

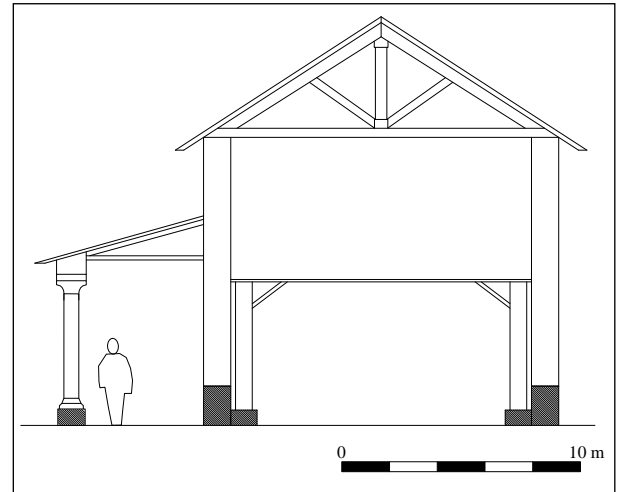


Figure 9.22. Reconstruction profile across the portico and rectangular building

The reason for the addition may have been an attempt to alleviate the problems of a rising water table, a problem that affects the Vrina Plain and the lower city of Butrint even today.

Beyond the southeastern wall of the rectangular building the drain that had been inserted with the original construction phase appears now to have been infilled. The deposit excavated from inside the drain was a dark green-grey silt deposit (4041) which appeared almost to be a deliberate backfill rather than a natural, organic build-up. This suggests the drain was no longer required, for reasons discussed below.

Sealing the drain and covering the area to the southeast of the rectangular building was a mid-green grey deposit (4005/4009/4010) which varied in depth from 0.08 m to 0.24 m. This deposit appeared to be another levelling layer to raise up this area and as with other levelling layers, this one had residual late 2nd-century ceramics within it, but this time they were very worn pieces indicating there had been a lot of movement and disturbance to the deposit the ceramics originally came from.

Cut into this deposit were three piers built with irregular-shaped limestone blocks bonded with an orange mortar (Fig. 9.21). They were set just under 2.50 m to the southeast of wall 4007 of the rectangular building and ran parallel to it. The northeastern pier 4032 measured 0.92 m in length, 0.54 m in width and was 0.37 m high. The next pier, 2.50 m along to the southwest, was 4033. This pier measured 0.82 m by 0.64 m and remained to a height of 0.26 m. The third pier (4034), a further 2.50 m to the southwest of 4033, measured 0.89 m by 0.45 m and was 0.19 m high. These piers may have formed a portico along this side of the rectangular building, the roof of which would have formed a shelter, thus removing the need for the earlier drain (Fig. 9.22). This potential portico would have fronted onto the earlier road that led from the *domus* site past the monuments (see Fig. 13.7). Unfortunately excavation in



Figure 9.23. View of walls 1174 and 1505 built around Monument 1

this area was unable to reach the contemporary road level due to the high water table.

To the north of the rectangular building further structures appear to have been added, again not long after the rectangular building was constructed. A T-shaped wall (1505/1174) was added, abutting the northern face of 1534 and built directly up against the southwestern and northwestern faces of Monument 1 (Fig. 9.23). The part of the wall abutting 1534 was 1174; constructed with rough limestone blocks, it measured 0.40 m in width and ran for just over 4 m to the northwest along the southwestern edge of Monument 1. At the western corner of the monument it became part of the northeast–southwest-aligned wall 1505. This wall (1505) was traced for 6 m to the northeast, running across the potential earlier road, before it reached the eastern limit of the excavation. To the southwest it ran for just 0.25 m before it was truncated by wall 1530/1511, associated with a later, small apsidal structure. However, wall 1505 probably continued further to the southwest and may relate to wall 1157/1158, located roughly 2.25 m to the southwest. This continuation of wall 1505 may have been reused as part of the later build in the small apsidal structure (see below). At its northeastern end wall 1505 was exposed to a height of 1.10 m and its width was just slightly wider than 1174, at 0.47 m. It too was constructed from uncut, rough limestone blocks with occasional tile pieces set in a pinky-orange mortar. The construction of walls 1174 and 1505 created a room on the southwest side of Monument 1, using wall 1534 as its southeastern limit. Internally this room appears to have been plastered as fragments of wall plaster were found adhering to the northwestern and southwestern faces respectively of walls 1534 and 1174 at the point where they connected (Fig. 9.24). Within this room it appears that some levelling-up was again necessary before the floor surface could be laid. Covering the very early layers from Phase 2 were two levelling layers (1173) and (1124). The lower of the two, 1173, was a general silty deposit with fragments of limestone, while the layer above (1124) was more mixed.



Figure 9.24. Detail of the wall plaster at the corner of walls 1174 and 1534

A silty clay with fragments of limestone and tile as well as occasional chunks of wall plaster, this would have made a good firm base for a floor layer (Fig. 9.25).¹⁰ This make-up layer is the first of the two key dating deposits related to the rectangular building complex, containing pottery dated to the 4th or 5th century. The surface that was then laid in this room (4029) was a light orangey-yellow compact mortar layer with a moderate amount of small limestone inclusions. This surface survived well and was uncovered to an extent of 5.70 m by 1.60 m. It abutted the walls 1174 and 1534 against the surviving wall plaster and appeared to be the only surviving occupation layer of this room.

On the northwest side of wall 1157/1158, two further walls were noted, 1155 and 1156, which may suggest further rooms were added to this complex. Wall 1155 runs to the northwest at the same level as 1157/1158. Its relationship to 1156 has been truncated by the 1960s drainage ditch, but 1156 runs at a right-angle to it. Their similar construction form and alignment suggest they are contemporary. Both walls were severely truncated by the drainage ditch, making any further relationships to the rest of the structures in this area impossible to determine.

To the northwest of Monument 1 the top course of one further wall (1508) that may also have been constructed in this phase was uncovered. This wall ran on a northwest to southeast alignment, at right angles to wall 1505. A length of 2.65 m was uncovered from the northern limit of the excavation; its southeastern end was truncated by a later wall (1506) which removed any relationship with wall 1505, but its construction form is similar and its width at 0.47 m is identical to 1505, suggesting it was possibly part of a range of further rooms to the north of this whole complex in this phase. A slot excavated through the apse of the later building in this area revealed a series of earlier layers that may relate to this complex of buildings. The earliest deposit examined was 1527, which extended throughout the slot and consisted of yellowish-grey silt and sand. It contained numerous tile fragments and has been interpreted as the bedding for a floor surface contemporary with the rooms that the apse truncates. Above 1527 a

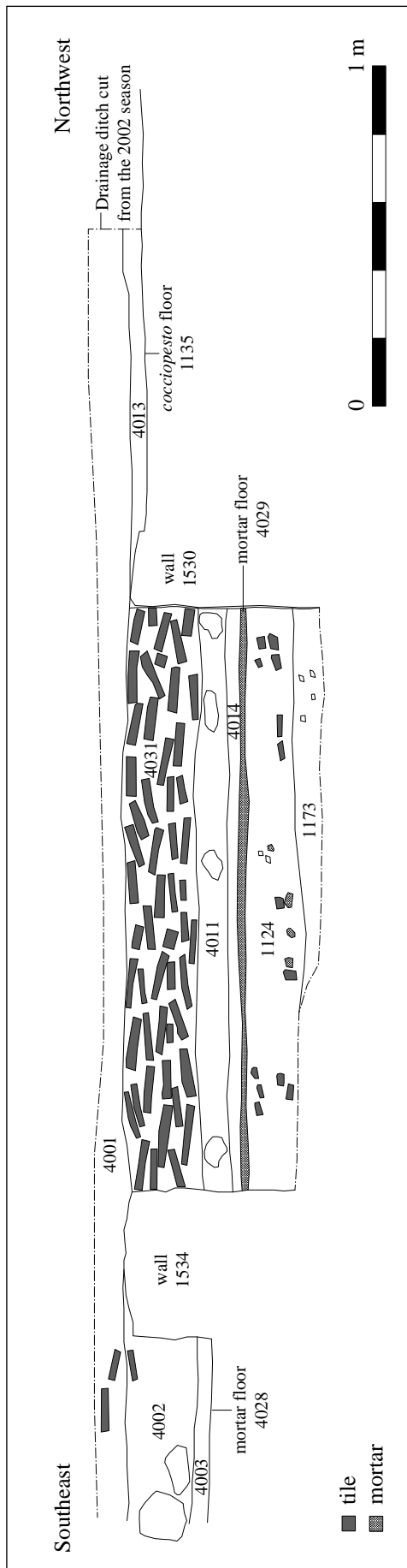


Figure 9.25. Northeast-facing section showing surface 4029 and its make-up layers 1173 and 1124 below

grey silt (1520) was excavated; it too contained numerous tile fragments along with mortar lumps and limestone fragments and was cut by the construction of the later apsidal building here. A chunk of mosaic pavement was found in the soil and it is believed that the deposit may represent the robbing of a mosaic floor associated with the building related to wall 1508.

With the construction of walls 1174 and 1505 along the southwest and northwest sides of Monument 1, and with wall 1534 along its southeastern side, the monument became fully enclosed. It appears that deposit 1031/1524 was then laid across the area, covering the lower courses of Monument 1 and forming a levelling for the occupation of another room situated on the northern side of wall 1534. This deposit consisted of waste blocks and limestone rubble, perhaps from the removal of the superstructure of Monument 1. This rubble was set into a mixture of orange and white mortar and brown silt and survived to the same height (*c.* 0.65 m) as the highest remaining superstructure blocks of the monument. Evidence from the northern part of the structure shows that this material, rather than having been simply thrown in, had been carefully placed, filling in a gap in the second course of stones. This suggests there was a purpose behind filling-in of this area and it was not just rubble from collapsed buildings. It also suggests that the stones of the monument were reused as part of the surface within this new room. The deposit contained ceramics dated to the 5th century.

Phase 5c (Fig. 9.26)

Within the rectangular building another phase of alterations took place. Towards the southwestern end of the main room it appears that a division wall (1533) aligned northwest–southeast was added, thereby creating two separate areas, the northeastern room measuring 8.25 m long and the southwestern room 5 m long (Fig. 9.27). Two different types of construction were noted in this wall: one using an orange mortar bond and the other a darker-brown compacted mortar. One section of the orange-mortar wall was located abutting the inner face of wall 1534 and measured 1.10 m in length. The second section was 0.80 m to the southeast of this, again a length of 1.10 m. In between these, and abutting the southeastern wall 4007, were the darker-mortared walls which appeared to be wider and more substantial in construction. The apparent better construction of these walls may indicate that they formed the initial division wall across the space, with perhaps two doorways, one fairly central and one to the northwest, allowing access between the two new rooms. These were subsequently blocked-in with the orange-mortared walls.

The insertion of the division wall 1533 may also coincide with the apparent blocking-in of what seemed to be the main entranceway into the original main room of the rectangular building. This blocking (4024) at the southwest end of wall 4007 showed up due to the distinct yellowy-brown sandy mortar used to bond the limestone fragments, as opposed to the pink-coloured mortar bonding wall 4007. The blocking may relate to the phase when the possible double doorways in wall 1533 were open and might indicate a realigning of the

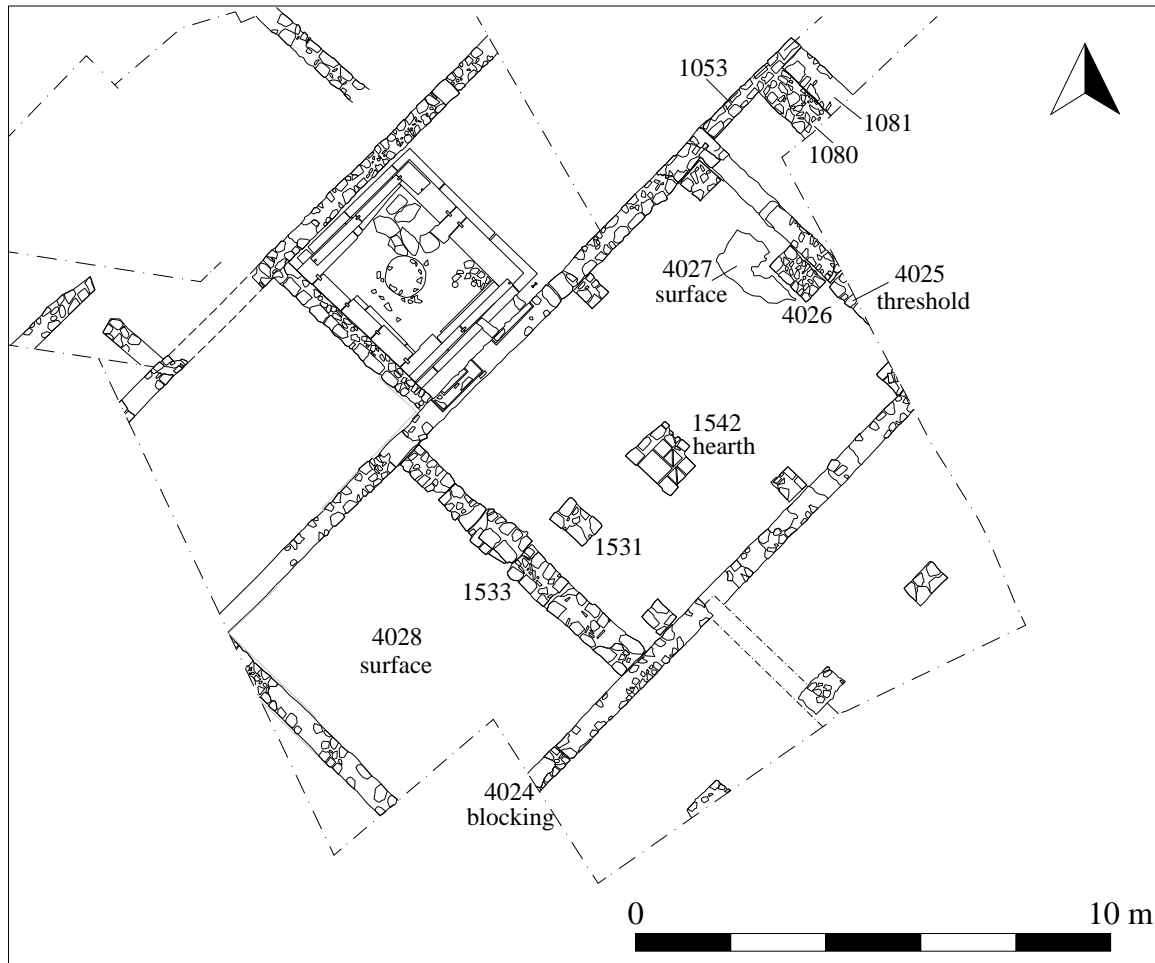


Figure 9.26. Plan of the Phase 5c rectangular building



Figure 9.27. View of the division wall 1533 creating two rooms in the rectangular building (2×1.60 m scales)

access to the building from its initial southeastern entrance to a new access from the northeast. This is supported by evidence for a new doorway cut through the northeastern wall 4017. Some 3.70 m along this wall from the northern corner the limestone slabs were very much larger and flatter than in the construction of the rest of the wall, the mid-orangey brown sandy mortar used to bond them was

different, and they appeared to be slightly off-set to the rest of the wall. These slabs appeared to be a threshold (4025) for a doorway, providing access into the rectangular building from a new room to the northeast. Creating this new room was wall 1053 that ran 2.60 m to the northeast from the corner of walls 1534 and 4017, joining then onto a northwest-southeast-aligned wall 1081 that ran for 1.45 m before it reached the limit of the drainage ditch trench edge. Presuming that this wall continued for the whole width of the rectangular building, it would have created a long narrow room on the northeastern end that would have had an internal width of just 2.11 m. The addition then of masonry 1080 could help explain this narrow room. Set into the corner of walls 1053 and 1081, masonry 1080 was a wide substantial base of limestone and tile fragments, measuring 0.73 m in width and running for 1.21 m along the inner face of wall 1081 into, and most likely beyond, the excavation limit (Fig. 9.28). The substantial width and construction of this piece of masonry might suggest it was the base for a stairway leading up to the second storey of the building, making this narrow room a thoroughfare to the second storey from the lower rooms. Along the western side of the stair block an olive-brown clay layer was found (1071) that seems to have formed the surface of this room.



Figure 9.28. View of walls 1053 and 1081 and the stairway foundation 1080 (1.60 m scale)

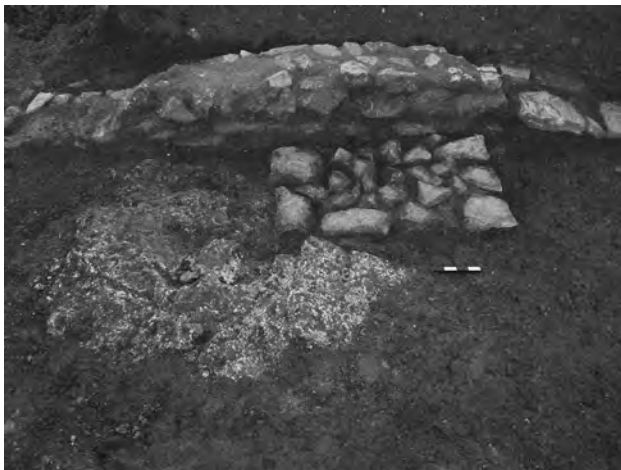


Figure 9.29. The northeastern pier 4026 and associated floor surface 4027 (20 cm scale)



Figure 9.30. The hearth feature 1542, with the later pier 1541 (20 cm scale)

Meanwhile, in the larger of the two new rooms created by the division wall 1533 two new piers had been added, presumably to act as post-pads to provide extra support for the floor above. The northeastern pier (4026), measuring 1.02 m by 0.60 m, was constructed with a mix of rectangular and angular unworked limestone blocks set within a white mortar bond and abutted the inner face of wall 4017 just next to the new doorway leading out to the stairway access (Fig. 9.29). The southwestern pier (1531), measuring 0.95 m by 0.60 m, was of a similar construction to 4026 and was located 0.74 m in from the face of the division wall 1533, just slightly to the southeast of the central line of the building.

Between these two piers one further feature was uncovered. Roughly 1.45 m northeast of pier 1531 was another low, rectangular-shaped feature (1542); it measured 1.10 m by 1.25 m and was constructed with a foundation layer of irregular limestone fragments capped

by a layer of red floor tiles (Fig. 9.30). These tiles had evidence of burning on their upper faces, suggesting this had formed the base of a hearth. An isolated burnt patch (1544) roughly 0.60 m in diameter and 0.10 m in depth, which was excavated just to the southeast of this feature, may have been the remains of the last rakings from this hearth. Between these features and wall 1533, a streaked green-brown silt deposit (1543) was noted abutting the sides of the construction. At 0.20 m deep and covering the earlier potential floor surface 1519/1106, this deposit may represent a levelling or make-up deposit for the floor surface 4027 that survived only at the northeastern end of the room, next to pier 4026. This layer (4027) was a light grey-white compact mortar layer which surrounded the western corner of pier 4026 to a depth of just 40 mm (see Fig. 9.29). Only 1.25 m by 0.80 m of this surface survived, but potentially it originally covered the entire area of this room.

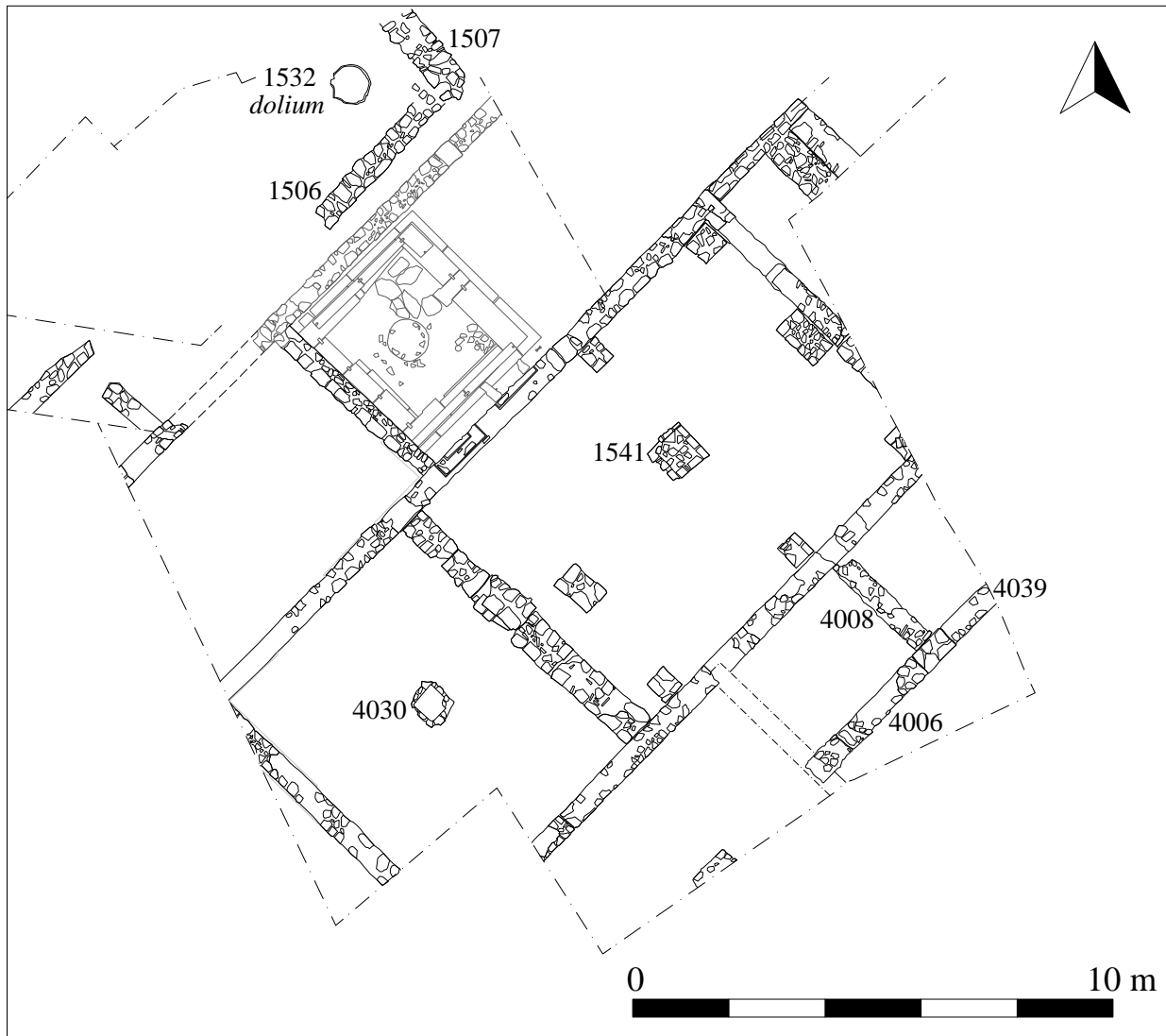


Figure 9.31. Plan of the Phase 5d rectangular building

In the smaller room to the southwest of the division wall 1533, another floor layer was laid (4028); similar to the slightly earlier floor (4029) it was a mid- to light orangey-yellow compact mortar containing a moderate amount of limestone fragments. This floor surface, interestingly, partially covered the remains of pier 4023 in the southwest corner, suggesting that at this phase the support provided by these piers for the second storey was no longer required since the construction of the new division wall 1533. The piers were then an unnecessary intrusion into this smaller space and appear to have been removed and floored over by layer 4028. This may also explain why piers 4045 and 4046 were no longer fully visible.

Phase 5d (Fig. 9.31)

This is the final phase of alterations to the rectangular building and its surrounding structures. Within the two rooms of the rectangular building, two new central piers were constructed. In the larger of the two rooms was pier

1541, a roughly square structure 0.95 m across and 0.35 m in height, constructed with a tile foundation topped by a limestone layer set in orange mortar which was surmounted by a final tile layer. This upper tile layer was neatly set with small rectangular tiles laid around the edge, bordering a central panel of larger square tiles, although this central area had been damaged (see Fig. 9.30). In the smaller room to the southwest, a levelling deposit of gritty, grey-green silt (4003) was first laid over the floor surface 4028 to a depth of roughly 0.15–0.19 m, the central pier 4030 being then cut into this (Fig. 9.32). This levelling deposit is the second of the key dating layers in this area, with a coin (SF 3420/Cat. 342) dated to the late 4th century recorded from it and the latest pottery being from the early 5th century.¹¹ Measuring 0.85 m by 0.74 m and 0.23 m in height, pier 4030 consisted of a foundation course of limestone fragments overlain by a course of tiles, over which a large limestone slab then appears to have been placed. Presumably these two pier bases were constructed to support the second storey again which, it must be assumed, was sagging once more. There was no evidence



Figure 9.32. Pier 4030 in the western room of the rectangular building (20 cm scale)

of a surface associated with the pier in the smaller room, but in the larger room a deposit (1522) was noted that may have been an occupation deposit. This light-grey silt deposit, with abundant mortar and tile fragments and occasional charcoal inclusions that could suggest occupation, covered the area of the smaller trench excavated around Monument 2 in the 2003 season and was seen to abut the central pier base 1541, the last sign of any occupation here before the demolition of the building (see Fig. 9.15).

To the southeast of the rectangular building the portico appears to have gone through some alterations, most likely in this last phase of occupation. In the space between the northeastern pier base (4032) and the southeastern face of wall 4007, a roughly coursed wall of uncut limestone bonded with a white-yellow gritty mortar (4008) was inserted. Measuring 2.50 m in length and 0.45 m wide, it remained standing to height of 0.30 m and was found to have been cut down through deposit 4005/4009, partially truncating the robber cut of drain 4042 below. The construction of this wall restricted access to the portico from northeast to southwest and divided it into two separate spaces. This control of the portico space was accentuated by the addition of two further walls between two of the piers which enclosed the northeastern end of the portico structure, thus limiting access into it from the southeast (Fig. 9.33). Wall 4006 was built between piers 4033 and 4032, whilst wall 4039 was built on the northeastern side of pier 4032 and carried on beyond the limit of the excavation, presumably connecting up with the next pier in the sequence. Both these walls, which appear to be contemporary, survived to a height of 0.25 m and were fairly crudely constructed with rough, irregular limestone fragments bonded with a pale-yellow mortar; they were 0.54–0.60 m in width. Unlike wall 4008, which had been cut into the levelling deposit 4005/4009, these walls had been built directly onto it. Very little was found within this walled-in area to explain why these blocking walls were added. However, a deposit of burnt material (4004) covering an area 0.60 m by 0.40 m was found in the

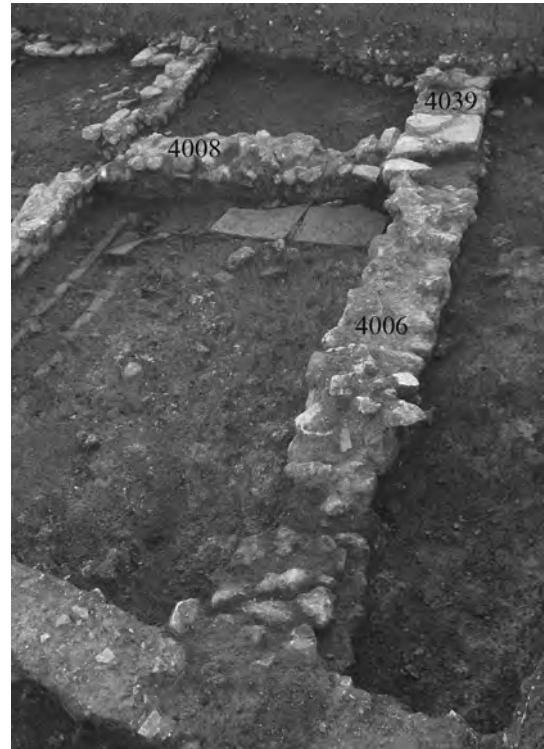


Figure 9.33. Walls 4006, 4008 and 4039 added to the portico

southeastern corner where wall 4008 abutted pier 4032 and wall 4006. The material appears to have been dumped here from elsewhere as there was no evidence that it had been burnt *in situ*. Part of a sheep's mandible was found within the deposit, along with fragments of at least two very fine glass vessels, suggestive of the rakings from a domestic fire. The deposit had been subsequently covered by a large flat limestone slab.

Further alterations occurred on the northwest side of the complex with what appeared to be the construction of a storage room. Two walls were uncovered roughly 0.50 m to the northwest of wall 1505 in the northeastern area of the excavation (Fig. 9.34). Wall 1506 ran parallel to wall 1505 for a length of 3.40 m and was bonded into wall 1507; this then turned a right-angle to form the northeastern extent of the room. Wall 1506 was built over the southeast end of the earlier wall 1508 and was constructed from irregular limestone blocks set in fairly regular courses and a few tile fragments, all bonded with a lumpy white mortar; it measured 0.52 m wide and only the top course was revealed. The northeastern wall (1507) was built from limestone blocks and fragments, including some quite substantial components, along with a small amount of tile. It was atypically very broad, measuring 0.75 m wide. The stones, which were set in white mortar, were irregularly shaped and unfinished. The earlier wall 1508 was probably demolished down to the present level at this time, as 1507 is on a different alignment and the space between them would have been less than 2 m. This building appears to have been a store-room as the base of a large *dolium* (1532) was found *in situ* in the space between wall 1507 and the earlier



Figure 9.34. The storage room to the north of the rectangular building formed by walls 1506 and 1507 (2 m scale)

wall 1508 (Fig. 9.35). Made of a reddish-orange fabric, it measured $0.91 \times 0.85 \times 0.25$ m. This room was probably part of a complex of rooms that extended beyond the limit of excavation. It is unclear though how this building related to the earlier complex formed with walls 1505 and 1174, as the southeastern limit wall 1506 does not run quite parallel to 1505, and is roughly 0.50 m away from it, leaving a very slim space between the two if wall 1505 was still standing. If wall 1505 was still standing, it would have been obvious to use it as the southeastern limit to this new room, so the fact that a new wall (1506) was built suggests 1505 was in a state of disrepair by this time.

Discussion

The ceramics retrieved from the deposits relating to this phase of occupation were very mixed and not completely clear. There was very little pottery recovered in general, and only a few coins. The sequence proposed here is mostly phased by the archaeological data and associations within the sequence of occupation on the Vrina Plain as a whole. With this in mind, and with the dates from the two securely dated deposits, this phase of occupation has been placed in Phase 5 of the Vrina Plain sequence, associated with the reuse of the *domus* area. The construction in this area suggests either complete disuse of Monument 1, or a very short further role change for it, while the *domus* was repaired after it was damaged in an earthquake.

The structures built in the monument area in this phase have a rich and relatively rapid sequence of construction, starting in Phase 5a with a rectangular building constructed along the southeastern line of Monument 1, covering Monument 2 completely. Related to this building was a drain running along the building's southeastern wall line and potentially some industrial use of the southwestern end of the building complex. The rectangular building had a second storey added in Phase 5b, as piers were constructed

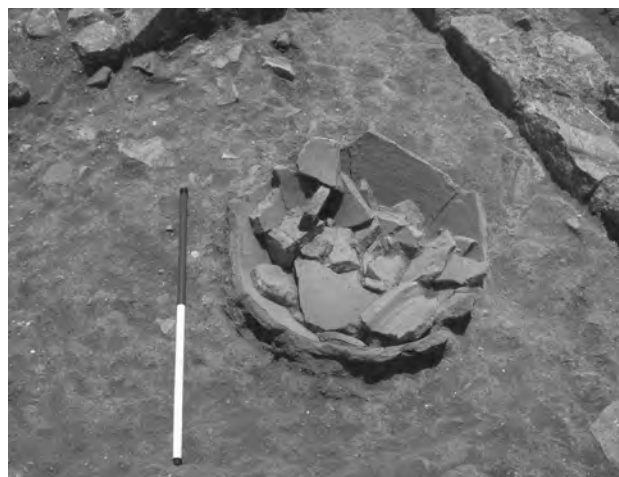


Figure 9.35. The dolium inside the storage room (1 m scale)

along the northwestern and southeastern walls to support it. Further piers were constructed parallel and just to the southeast of the building, creating a potential portico along this side; the drain had been covered in by this time. On the northwestern side of the building a wall was built along the southwestern line of Monument 1; this was bonded into a wall running northeast–southwest along the northwest side of Monument 1. This T-shaped wall appears to create a new room on the southwestern side of Monument 1, which then had a floor surface laid, and a further room to the northeast that included the area of the monument structure, removing any surviving superstructure and infilling it with rubble to form a new surface. A further wall running to the northwest would have formed more rooms on the northwest side. The rectangular building was then divided up in Phase 5c with the construction of a division wall creating a smaller southwestern room and a larger northeastern room, both with new floor surfaces. The northeastern, larger room had two new piers and a central hearth. A further room was constructed on the northeast end, with a new doorway made through the old northeastern wall of the rectangular building. In Phase 5d the two rooms in the rectangular building were provided with new central piers, adding extra support for the second storey, and a further building was added to the northwest of the complex; this was probably for storage, as evidenced by the recovery of a *dolium* set into the floor surface. The absence of any demolition layers between the different floors or levelling layers in this complex suggests a relatively rapid sequence of alterations and additions in this phase.

The paucity of finds from this phase limits what can be said regarding the use of the complex. The few datable ceramics that were recovered, together with the *dolium*, seemed to be mostly of the storage or cooking type. This, together with the form and relatively crude construction of the building, suggests it was not part of another large house but rather that this complex represented service and storage rooms that might relate to the newly rebuilt *domus* to the west.

Phase 6: mid- to late 5th century AD

Within the room to the southwest of Monument 1, covering the final floor surface (4029) was a mixed yellow-white mortar and silt deposit (4014) that suggested an initial period of destruction in this room; this was followed by a thicker demolition layer (4011). This mid-yellowish-greenish grey, slightly clayey silt deposit was up to 0.18 m in thickness and contained fragments of mortar and wall plaster, indicating a further period of abandonment or destruction. In turn this deposit was covered by 4031/1535, a thick mid-reddish-brown silt deposit 0.15 m to 0.28 m in depth which contained frequent tile fragments. This was the final demolition layer here, which infilled only the space to the northwest of wall 1534; it did not appear to cover it, suggesting perhaps that while this complex on the northwest side of the rectangular building was going out of use, the rectangular building itself may have remained standing. Cutting into this demolition layer was wall 1530, part of the next phase of construction which was built over the line of this earlier room (see Fig. 9.25).

In the open space on the northeast side of Monument 1 further evidence of demolition was revealed. A compact deposit (1050/1512) measuring up to 0.27 m in depth and containing abundant mortar lumps and some tightly packed pockets of limestone rubble, as well as roof tile fragments, charcoal flecks and shell, covered occupation layer 1515 related to the earliest use of Monument 1. This layer sloped down from the north and west and its constituents strongly suggest that it represents demolition or destruction rubble. It is suggested that the source of the rubble was wall 1505; if so, this demolition layer may relate to Phase 5d and the construction of the new store-room with walls 1506 and 1507, as wall 1505 appears to have become obsolete at this time. This layer (as 1516) also extended along the gap between the southwestern side of Monument 1 and wall 1534.

A layer of demolition was also excavated within the Phase 5d store-room. Infilling and covering the remains of the *dolium* in the centre of the room was a brown silty clay deposit (1504) containing shell, charcoal and tile fragments which was possibly part of the demolition of the roof.

One further demolition layer (1085) was excavated to the northeast of the rectangular building. This was a dark-brown clay deposit with abundant tile and limestone fragments throughout its matrix. With a depth of 0.25 m it was quite a substantial rubble layer and was seen to cover part of wall 1081 of the rectangular building. Despite it being full of ceramics dating to the early 2nd century, it can only be part of the demolition phase of the Phase 5 rectangular building and the ceramics must be residual. This mixing of earlier ceramics into later deposits appears to be quite common around this area of the excavation.¹²

Discussion

This phase saw a brief period of demolition and perhaps abandonment of part of the building complex. From the

scant dating evidence and the associated sequence it seems likely that this period was between the mid-5th and early 6th century when the next period of occupation starts.

Phases 7 and 8: early to mid-6th century AD (Plate 9.3)

There was a renewed occupation of the Vrina Plain in this period comprising a new settlement within which was a major basilica (see Chapter 6). The area around the monuments also seems to have been altered at this time, as indicated by a small apsidal building uncovered to the west of Monument 1 (Fig. 9.36). The form and location of this building by the main route to the new basilica, along with its proximity to the valley road and bridge, both of which seem to have remained accessible, suggests it was a small chapel or shrine.

The new building was defined by walls 1510/1509, 1511, 1530/1159, 1529 and 1007 (Fig. 9.37). Part of wall 1157/1158 from the earlier service area complex was also incorporated within the construction.

The apse (1510/1509), located at the northeast end of the building, had been built over the western end of the earlier wall 1506 and was constructed out of a mix of small and medium-size limestone fragments set within a white mortar (Fig. 9.38). The stones were regularly coursed, with flat faces presented on the inside of the building. The apse was not perfectly symmetrical, having a tighter curve on its northwestern side. The area within the apse measured 3.40 m from northwest to southeast and 2.30 m from northeast to southwest; the wall itself was 0.60 m wide. The size and rough polygonal form of the apse might suggest that it originally supported a semi-dome.

Across the opening of the apse and keyed into it was wall 1511. This wall extended beyond the apse to form the end walls of the small aisles of the building. To the southeast, due to the presence of Monument 1, the line of 1511 was shifted slightly so that it did not obscure the monument, implying the earlier structure remained visible at this time. To the northwest, beyond the junction



Figure 9.36. View from the southwest of the small chapel built on the western side of the rectangular building (2 m scale)

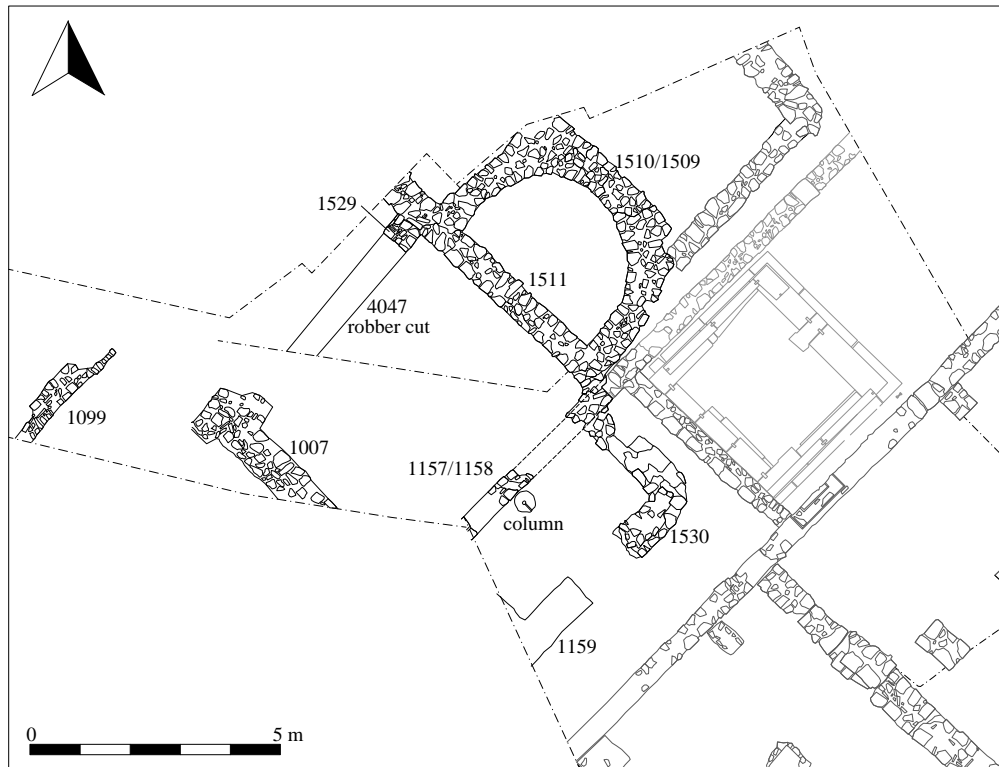


Figure 9.37. Plan of the small chapel and surrounding buildings in the early to mid-6th century

with the apse, wall 1511 ran on for almost 1 m into the northwestern limit of the excavation. Wall 1511 measured 5.50 m in overall length and was as wide as its apsidal counterpart 1510 at 0.62 m. In composition 1511 comprised roughly finished irregular, medium and large limestone blocks and tile fragments in regular courses set within a white mortar bond.

Bonded into the southeastern end of 1511 was wall 1530/1159. This substantial wall, the southwestern end of which continued beyond the limit of excavation, measured 0.73 m in width and had been built on a very solid foundation of large limestone blocks. Set within the foundation was a gap (1.25 m wide) that possibly formed a doorway (Figs 9.39 and Fig. 9.40). This would have allowed access to the southeastern area where the earlier rectangular building may still have been standing. Apart from the tile layer 4031, through which the foundation 1530 had been cut (see Fig. 9.25), no other deposits were found relating to this phase. However, it is likely that the rectangular building was still standing and in use at this time as the final demolition layers that covered the entire area lay directly over the last floor surfaces from Phase 5d of that building, suggesting continued use throughout the time that the chapel was here.

The southwestern limit of the building was formed by wall 1007. Only a short length of this wall was revealed (c. 3 m) as the northwestern end had been truncated by the cutting of the drainage ditch, while to the southeast it continued beyond the limit of excavation. Built from a mix of limestone blocks of varying shapes and sizes,



Figure 9.38. The apse and associated walls of the small chapel (2 m scale)

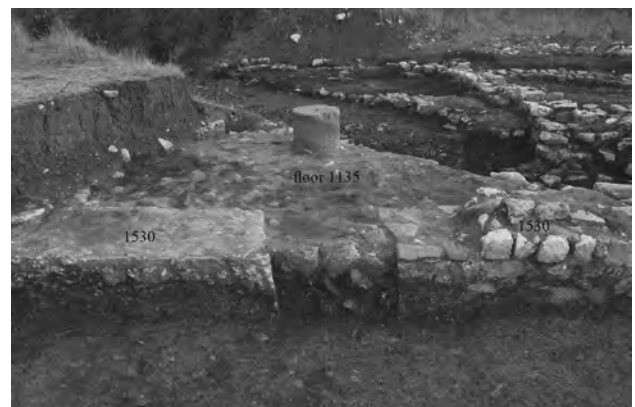


Figure 9.39. Wall 1530 showing the gap left in the foundation level, creating a doorway

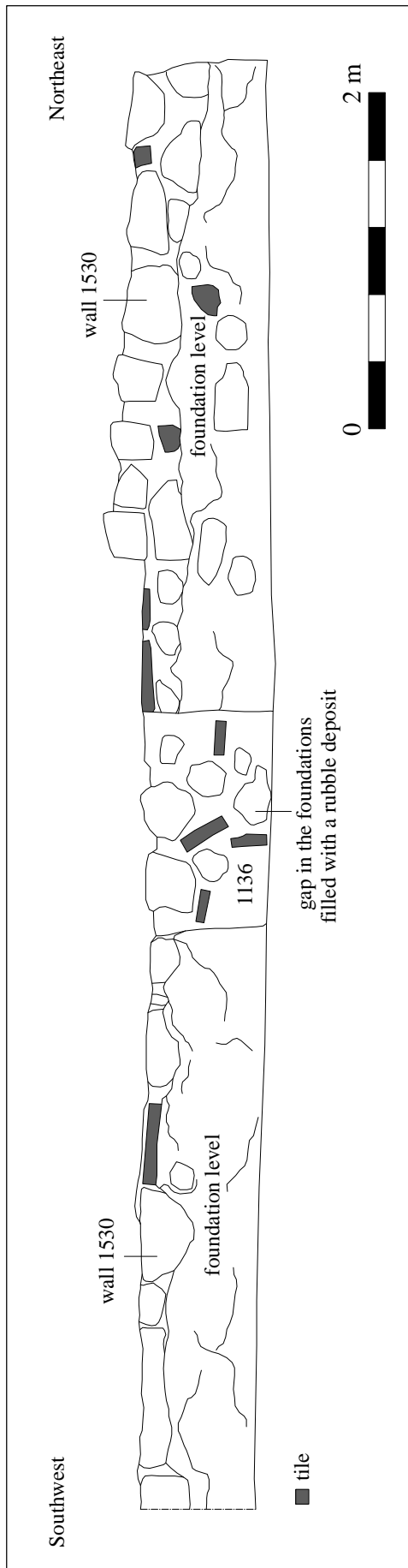


Figure 9.40. Detail of elevation of wall 1530

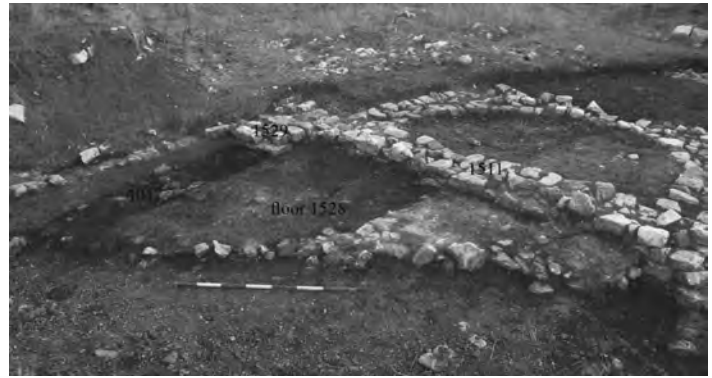


Figure 9.41. Wall 1529 and associated robber cut 4047 through the floor surface 1528 (1.60 m scale)

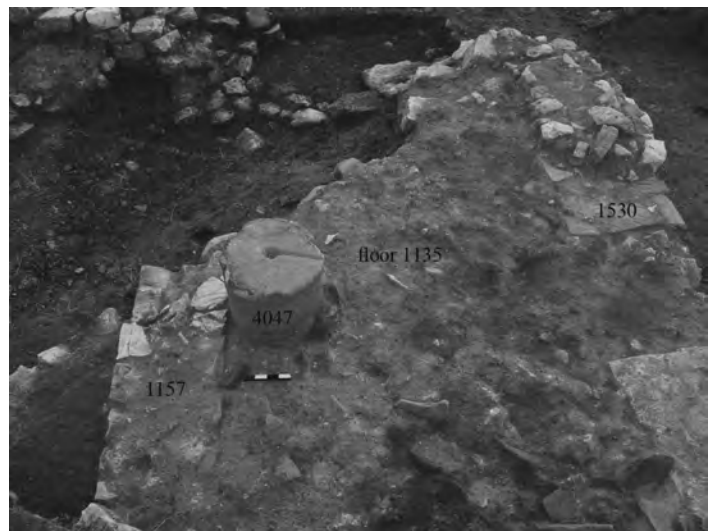


Figure 9.42. The reused column 4047 in the aisle of the chapel (20 cm scale)

the stones were bonded in white mortar. The wall was extremely broad, measuring 0.69 m wide.

Internally, two division walls divided the building into three rooms. The earlier wall 1157/1158 became the southeastern division wall, while the northwestern division was formed by wall 1529, which was keyed into wall 1511. Built in a similar manner to the other contemporary walls, only a short length of wall 1529 survived (0.50 m long) as to the southwest it had been almost completely removed by robber cut 4047 (Fig. 9.41). Despite this, part of the lower foundation of the wall was observed on the opposite side of the drainage ditch where it could be seen to be keyed into wall 1007. Due to the alignment of this wall veering slightly to the south in comparison with the building's other longitudinal walls, the width of the central room varied from 4.50 m in front of the apse to 4.10 m at its southwestern end.

All three rooms were covered by a *cocciopesto* surface. Within the central room the surface (1003/1008/1528) had been laid over a series of levelling layers (1011, 1009 and 1137) that sealed the earlier walls 1155 and 1156. A similar levelling deposit (1136) was found beneath the floor (1135) of the southeastern room.

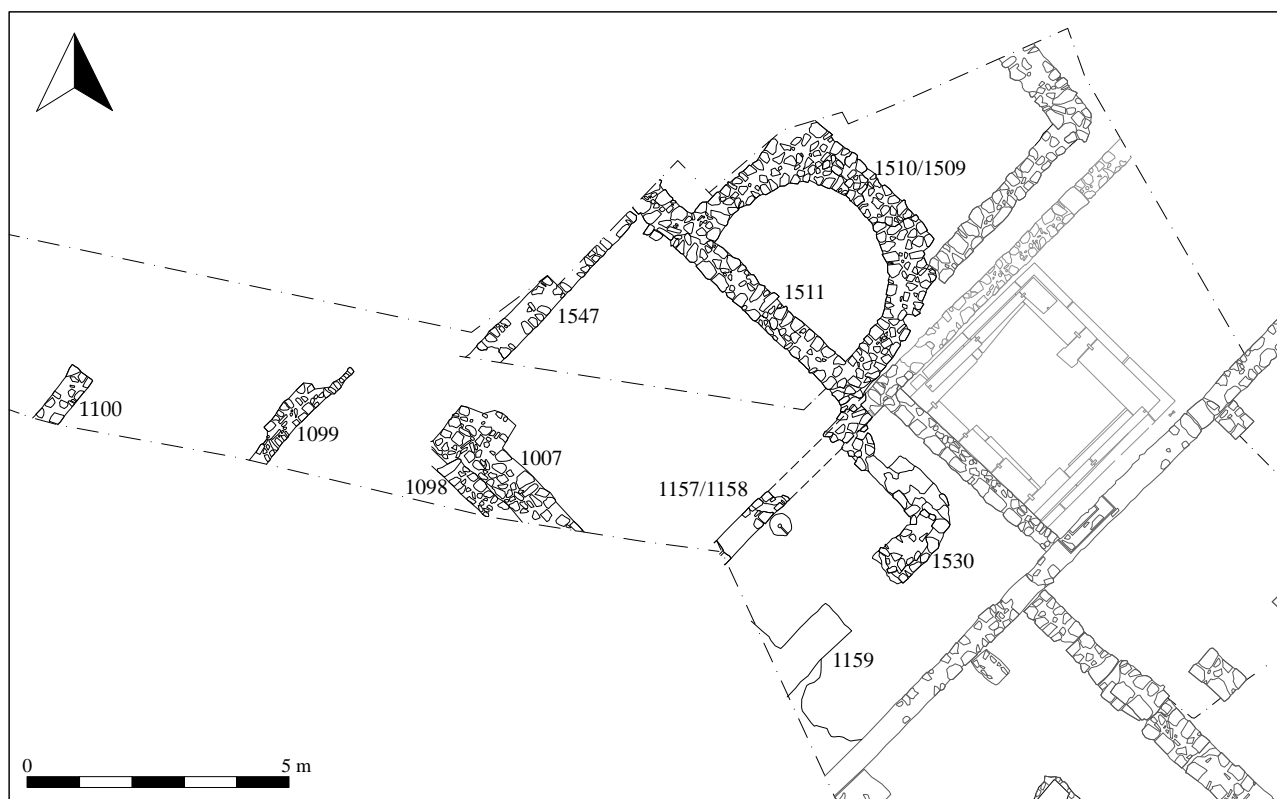


Figure 9.43. Plan of alterations to the small chapel

Subsequently the top of a broken and degraded marble column (4047), 0.45 m in diameter, was set into the floor of this eastern room (Fig. 9.42). Positioned against the southeast face of wall 1157/1158, the exterior surface of the drum was uneven and worn with some evidence of what appeared to be limescale adhering to it, suggestive of water dripping down it over time. This might suggest that the column once held a basin containing water.

The only contemporary layer found in the apse was a greenish-grey silt clay (1503). Located above the foundation level of the apse, this deposit contained a very corroded and worn coin dating to the late 4th century (or later) (SF 2887/Cat. 330) and appears to be a make-up deposit for a floor surface that has not survived. The depth of this material, at 0.33 m, and the step up created by wall 1511, indicates that the floor of the apse was raised above that within the central area of the chapel.

Due to the limited extent of the excavations it is unclear what was located to the southwest of the building but it is possible that a further defined space, possibly a narthex, was located here. This is suggested by wall 1099, a northeast–southwest-aligned wall situated just beyond the truncated end of wall 1007. Measuring 0.51 m wide and built over a foundation that had been dug through layer 1078, this wall would probably have abutted the northwest corner of the chapel. A dark olive-brown sandy silt (1065) (0.22 m thick) found along the southeast side of the wall, sealing the offset foundation, seems to have formed a make-up layer for an internal surface that has subsequently been removed.

A rough surface (1101/1102) did, however, survive to the northwest of the wall. Thought to be an external surface, it consisted of a base of compacted sand, pebbles, some slightly larger stones, tile fragments and bonding mortar, producing a mixed red and yellow appearance. On top of this were set a number of different surfacing materials including patches of close-set floor tiles, limestone slabs, and roof-tile fragments. Some elements of this surface may have been repairs. Although in a fairly poor condition, the surface extended as far as the southeastern edge of the earlier wall 1088, suggesting this area was an open space, possibly a courtyard, at this time. The use of wall 1088 as the limit of this space also implies both the wall and possibly the structure it demarcated were still standing at this time (see Fig. 9.3).

At some point during the lifespan of this small structure, the building was altered slightly. Walls 1529 and 1007 were removed and replaced by walls 1547 and 1098 respectively (Fig. 9.43). Wall 1547 was positioned roughly 0.20 m to the west of wall 1529 and had been built over the earlier *cocciopesto* floor surface of the western room (1003/1008/1528). Aligned parallel to wall 1157/1158, it now created a space measuring 5.35 m in width between the two. Only the top of the wall was revealed, composed of roughly faced small and medium-sized limestone fragments and tile pieces set in a white mortar. Measuring 0.56 m in width, just over 4 m of the length was exposed before it was truncated by the drainage ditch cut at its southwestern end. At its

northeastern end there was no direct physical relationship established with the apse cross-wall 1511, as a 0.10 m gap existed between the two, the *cocciopesto* surface of the earlier room being visible within the gap.

The drainage ditch truncated the southwestern end of wall 1547, but it is thought this wall would have joined the other newly built wall 1098, which now formed the southwestern limit of the building. Built abutting the outer face of the earlier wall 1007, and terminating against the inner face of wall 1099, this new wall (1098) was constructed principally from *spolia*, including a broken threshold stone and a cemented block of stones that resemble either a pier or an intact segment lifted from another wall. Elsewhere stone in a variety of shapes and sizes was employed, set in white mortar.

Along with these alterations, the open space to the west of the chapel appears to have been reconfigured, as a wall (1100) was inserted across it. Built over the earlier surface and extending for 1.14 m, wall 1100 was 0.44 m wide and comprised irregular-shaped, medium-sized stones set in yellow mortar. Its alignment corresponds with the other walls in the chapel area and it seems to have been used to sub-divide the former open space into two areas. Due to the drainage ditch it is unclear whether the exposed northeastern end of the wall is a deliberate or truncated end. If it is the former, then this may suggest the position of a doorway, assuming the wall extended across the whole of the former space.

Phases 9 to 16: late 6th century AD onwards

One of the initial demolition layers associated with the small chapel is 1002. This rubble deposit consisted primarily of limestone masonry fragments and broken red tiles in a clay matrix. A number of the tiles had been burned, perhaps indicating a possible cause for the demise of the chapel. The deposit was generally 0.20 m deep and covered both wall 1157 and the floor surface 1003 to the northwest. It also (as context 1020) covered walls 1099 and 1100 and the rough surface 1101/1102. The settlement associated with the large basilica fell out of use from the mid-6th century (see Chapter 6) and from the archaeological data available here it is likely the same date can be attributed to the demise of this small chapel. A further demolition layer (4013), a mid-grey-brown clay silt deposit containing moderate amounts of tile debris, was found overlying floor 1135 in the southwestern room of the apsidal building. This was the first demolition layer to cover this side of the small apsidal building and was followed by a similar tile-filled rubble deposit (1029) that covered the southwestern walls of the apsidal structure.¹³

Around Monument 1 the rubble deposit 1501 appeared to have tumbled from the top of wall 1505 to fill the narrow space between the monument and the wall itself. This deposit comprised abundant limestone blocks and fragments, along with some tiles and mortar lumps in a light-brown silty matrix. A tile-rich demolition deposit

(1134) was also excavated from this side of the monument, sealing the earlier demolition layer 1050/1512. Comprised of just tiles within a very sandy matrix, this appeared to be the result of the demolition of a roof from one of the structures that had still been partially standing on this side; it may perhaps have come from the northeastern end of the rectangular structure. Covering the old store-room on the northwest side of the excavation area was the rubble layer 1535, containing abundant tile and mortar lumps. Overlying all these initial demolition layers was a general destruction layer (1502) that covered much of the area of the northwestern excavation trench, including the apsidal structure. This comprised a brown silty clay with abundant large tile fragments, including some complete roof tiles. Evidently much of the deposit derived from the dereliction of structures in the immediate area.

Within the rectangular building, overlying the surface in the main room (4027) at a depth of 0.25 m was a mid-to dark-greenish grey silt demolition layer (4012) with a moderate amount of limestone fragments, tile and mortar lumps.¹⁴ In the smaller room of the rectangular building a demolition layer (4018) covered the last occupation level (4030); this deposit almost certainly represented the collapse of wall 4016. At the far northeastern end of the rectangular building and extending beyond the limit of excavation, the demolition deposit 4040 covered wall 4017 and its threshold as well as the stairwell area beyond. Overlying these demolition deposits was a mixed mid- to dark-brown/green grey silty clay deposit (4002)/(1514) between 0.06 m to 0.22 m in depth. This deposit sealed all the visible structures on the southeast side of Monument 1. It is noteworthy that the amount of actual building material within this deposit was fairly minimal, which would seem to imply that potentially the structures within this area were all systematically dismantled or robbed prior to the build-up of this layer. There were occasional patches of ash deposits along with concentrations of burnt smashed tile fragments within the deposit although none appeared to have been burnt *in situ*, seeming rather to be more organic in nature. This deposit did produce a large number of small finds including several iron nails, a key, coins, and a copper alloy bracelet, probably objects from the last occupational use of the rectangular building that had now been demolished.¹⁵

Covering all the demolition layers within the drainage ditch excavation and in the open area to the southeast was the subsoil 4001/1536, a light-brown silty clay up to 0.35 m deep which contained abundant tile and limestone fragments. This was overlain by the topsoil (1049/1500/4000), consisting of green silty clay deposits which occur across the Vrına Plain. These appear to be either natural alluvial deposits from the seasonal flooding of the plain, or more likely thick levelling layers deposited across the plain from the clearing of the drainage ditches in the 1960s, which would explain the finds and mixed pottery of all dates within them.

This final phase in the Monument area marks the end of

the occupational evidence within the archaeological record. Excavation revealed a series of rubble and demolition layers that covered all the latest occupation levels discussed previously. While no physical evidence of occupation was uncovered during the excavation of these final layers, in the way of post-holes or trampled surfaces, there were, however, numerous coins, worn pottery and other small metal finds, suggesting perhaps there was some passing use of this area.

Notes

- 1 For a discussion of the hypothesized road system see Crowson and Gilkes 2007, 123–6 and fig. 8.4. See also Bescoby (Chapter 2) and Greenslade 2013, 125–9 and fig. 8.6. For an initial summary of this area see Crowson and Gilkes 2007, 131–5, and for an interpretation see Ricciardi 2007, 165–74.
- 2 The dating of the later phases here are more by association than by pottery or coin finds. This is due to there being very little in the way of pottery in the later layers and very few coins; any pottery that was found was in very mixed deposits. The latest pottery dates to perhaps the 5th century; a few pieces of medieval pot have been noted but not dated.
- 3 The monumental structures were numbered relating to the sequence they were found in: Monument 1 was uncovered first but is the later of the two in date.
- 4 The trench had clearly been dug to lift out the substantial and valuable dressed masonry from this area. The cut was excavated to a depth of 0.25 m where it then reached the water table; rubble stones were revealed at this level – more of the hard-core material 1550. The cut was linear and followed the line of the limestone slabs; it measured 0.75–0.82 m wide, with steep sides except where the masonry had been prised out – here the sides were enlarged and rounded. The cut contained a single backfill deposit (1545) of dark-grey clay silt with tile and limestone fragments.
- 5 The records from the 2002 season do not note the relationship of this layer and the layer beneath (1097) to any of the later walls revealed in this area; however, the ceramic evidence suggests these deposits are from this earlier phase.
- 6 See Volume 6.3, Chapter 9, 1050.3, Fig. 9.6.2.
- 7 See Ricciardi 2007, 165–74.
- 8 Ricciardi 2007, 170–2.
- 9 This deposit (4043) and the deposit the drain was cut into (4044) both contained ceramics dating only to the mid- to late 2nd or early 3rd century AD. As with other backfills and levelling-type deposits in this area, the early pottery mixed into later layers suggests the material used had been dug up from other locations and brought over to infill the areas affected by the rising water level.
- 10 The wall plaster contained in this layer shows that the plaster on wall 1175 was perhaps not in very good condition by this time, although the low frequency suggests only a small amount had actually fallen off the walls and thus it was not in total disrepair at this time.
- 11 This layer and 1124 are key to the dating of the rectangular building complex as a whole, as throughout the building there are no demolition deposits between the phases of alterations, or any signs of repair work that might suggest it went through the earthquake in the second half of the 4th century; this suggests the initial construction of the building and subsequent alterations probably happened in a relatively short space of time after the earthquake. The Phase 5b layer 1124 helps set the first two phases of use, with ceramic dates in the early 5th century. There are pottery joins between layer 4003 and the earlier layer in Phase 5a (4015), showing the short span of time between the alterations at this end of the building (see Volume 6.3, Chapter 9). Therefore the 4th- or 5th-century pottery in the Phase 5a deposit (1124) and the early 5th-century pottery in one of the last layers of use here suggests the whole building was occupied during the late 4th century and into the first half of the 5th century.
- 12 See Volume 6.3, Chapter 9.
- 13 To the west, beyond these walls, this secondary rubble layer was numbered 1013.
- 14 A potential grave was also uncovered below this demolition layer. It was cut deep into the very lowest layers, at the level of the stones that formed the 2nd-century precinct pavement or monumental structure. Within the structure of Monument 2, a line of five irregularly shaped limestone slabs aligned northeast–southwest was uncovered. These can be seen in Figs. 9.6 and 9.7 and were initially thought to form a capping for a drain but no continuation cut for such a feature was found and the dimensions of the feature were more suggestive of it being a grave. Its form was also similar to the Phase 11 graves uncovered in the *oikos* excavations to the west (see Chapter 7). Unfortunately this feature was not excavated and therefore its purpose was not confirmed.
- 15 The finds included iron nails (SFs 3389, 3415, 3416, 3423, 3424, 3427, 3437, 3439, 3440, 3442 and 3443), a key (SF 3426), coins (SFs 2872/Cat. 176, 2888/Cat. 331, 3380/Cat. 43, 3381/ Cat. 7, 3382/Cat. 455, 3384/Cat. 340, 3387/Cat. 341, 3390/Cat. 47, 3417/Cat. 74, 3425/Cat. 54, 3438/Cat. 53 and 3991/Cat. 58) and a copper alloy bracelet (SF 3413).

10 The mosaic pavements of the great peristyle *domus*

John Mitchell

Following common practice in private houses of any distinction under the Roman Empire, it is likely that the vast majority of the porticoes and rooms in the great peristyle *domus* on the Vrina Plain were paved with mosaic. However, only two such pavements were found

more or less intact, in Rooms 3 and 5 (mosaics 3499 and 115 respectively). In other areas, the mosaics were either largely destroyed or else only partially revealed in small interrogative trenches (Fig. 10.1).

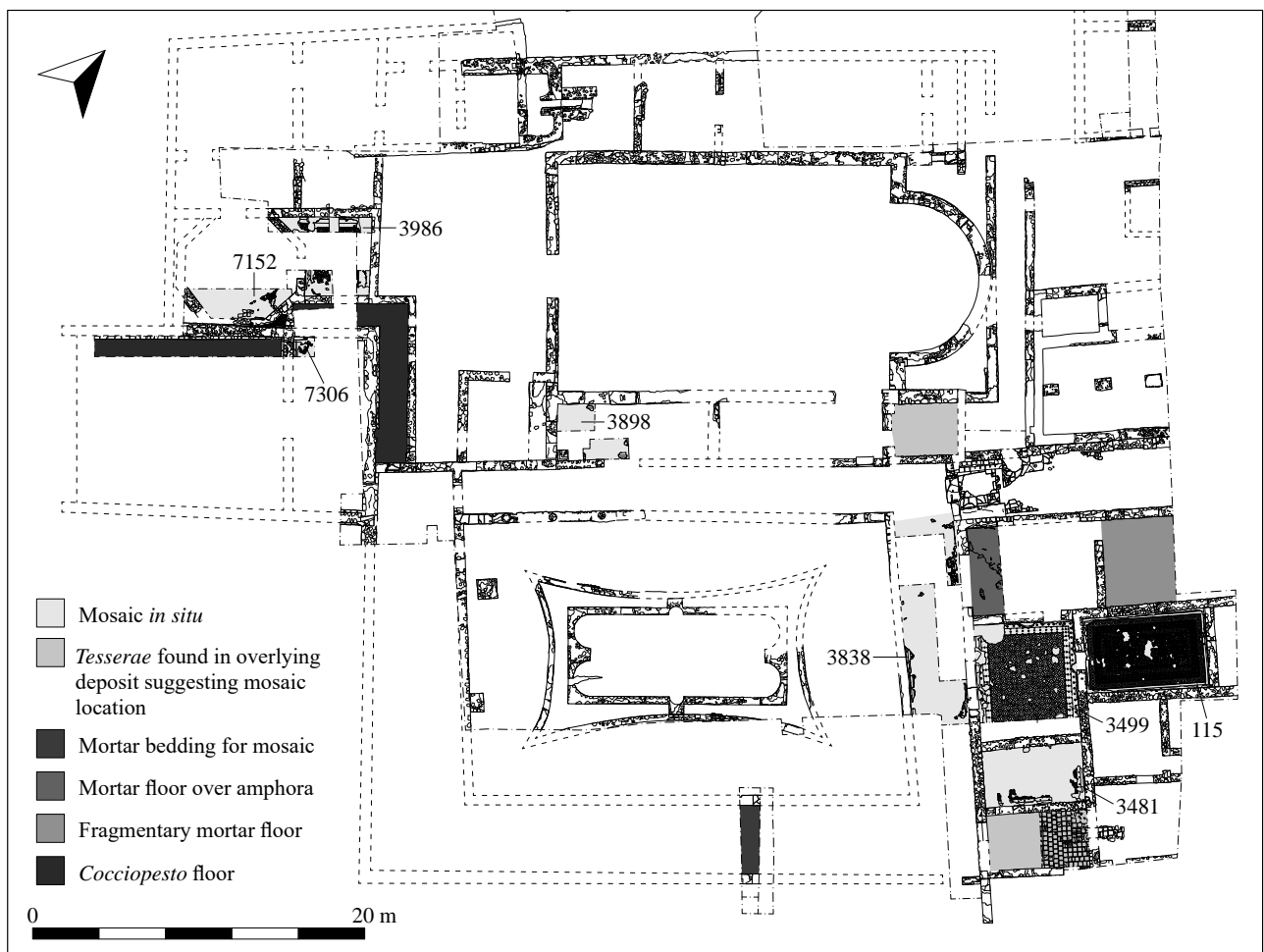


Figure 10.1. Plan locating the mosaic pavements of the Roman domus

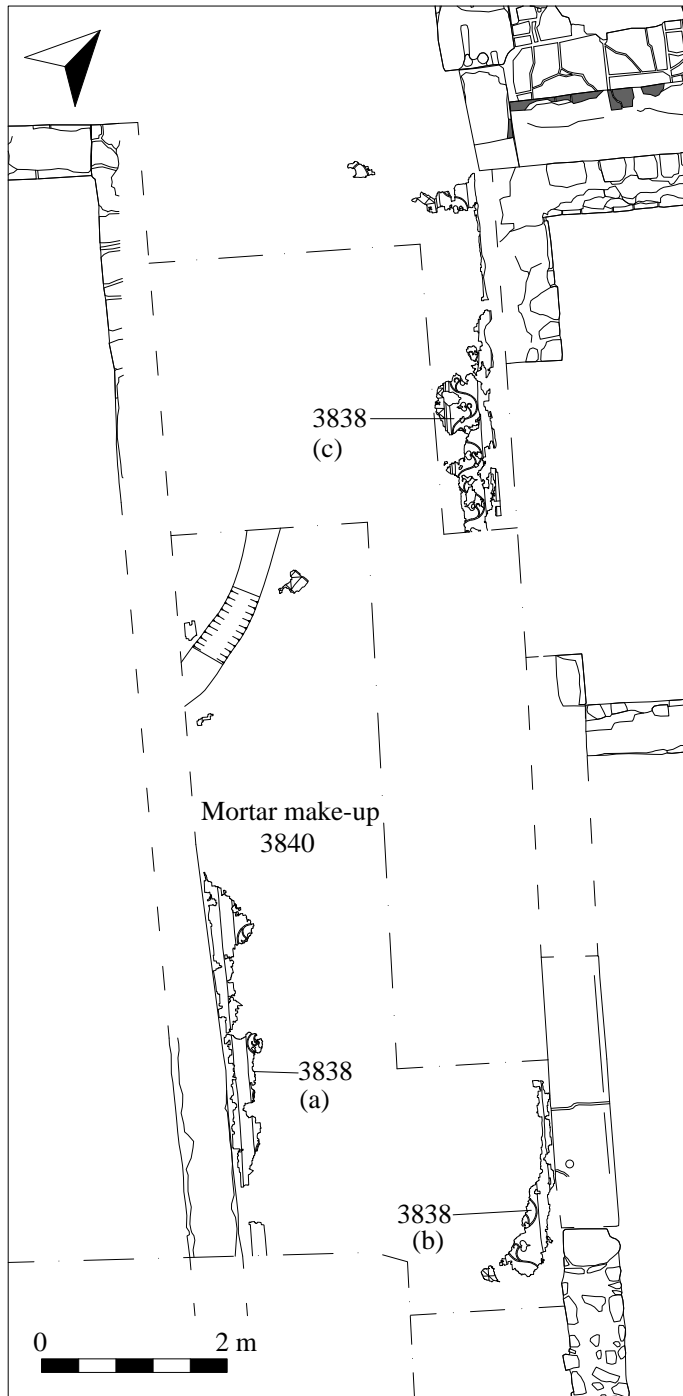


Figure 10.2. Plan of the mosaic pavement in eastern portico of the peristyle (Mosaic 3838)

The Phase 3a mosaics (mid- to late 3rd century AD)

East portico of the peristyle (Mosaic 3838)

The eastern portico of the great peristyle was paved with mosaic, although only a few fragments of the pavement are preserved, in two trenches (mosaic 3838) (Fig. 10.2). Very little survives of the central field; however, the small areas which do survive suggest that the scheme was made up of configurations of small

white oblong rectangles and tangent white and half-size black isosceles triangles. In the best-preserved passage, a strip at the extreme edge of the central field, it looks as though these may have formed a tangent sequence of eight-pointed stars formed on large poised squares, resulting in smaller interstitial squares, a design that is also used in a floor in the northwestern sector of the *domus* (mosaic 3986). This was framed on both sides by a simple yet elegant scrolling black ivy-trail.

One intermittent passage of the border is preserved against the western wall of the walk (Plate 10.1 (a)). Starting from the wall, this consisted of a band of white formed of 10 or 11 *tesserae* (c. 110–150 mm), followed by a band of pale pink, 10 or 12 *tesserae* (130–135 mm) wide, and then a border with a generous scrolling ivy-trail running an undulating course over a white ground. The stem of the trail is delineated with a single line of black *tesserae*; each scroll is occupied by a single large black heart-shaped leaf. The tops of two scrolls and parts of two leaves are preserved at this point.

A further small area is preserved more or less opposite, on the eastern side of the walk, just in front of the threshold of the entrance to Room 3, with parts of two adjacent scrolls in the border and a small patch of the central field, the pattern consisting of small equilateral triangles, black and white, adjoining an oblong white rectangle (Plate 10.1 (b)).

A more indicative area of the design is to be found further to the north along the east wall of the walk, where a length of ivy-trail with six undulations is more or less completely preserved to its full width (c. 0.30 m), together with some fragments of the outer edge of the central field (Plate 10.1 (c)). It is at this point that the surviving elements at the edge of this internal field seem to indicate an overall pattern of eight-pointed stars. The ivy-trail describes high-arching regular undulations with secondary shoots branching-off from the main stem to end in heart-shaped leaves, alternately upright and inverted. A small hoop-shaped runner curls away from the secondary shoot, immediately under the leaf. The trail is rigorously uniform in its configuration along its length.

It is unclear if the design of the central walk of this portico was uniform along its full length, although this is inherently probable. It is likely that the floors of all four walks of the peristyle were laid with the same design, framed by ivy-trail, bichrome throughout in black and white.

Room south of the apsidal hall (Mosaic 3898)

Vestigial fragments of a mosaic pavement (3898) were found in two trenches in one of the inner

rooms of the *domus*, to the south of the apsidal hall (see Figs 4.57 and 4.58).

In the northwestern trench a small area of mosaic was preserved against the north wall of the room. Against the wall is a white outer border, now of 5 *tesserae* (90 mm to the wall), followed by a band of pink of 10 *tesserae* (120 mm) and an area of white, of which 11 *tesserae* (145 mm) are preserved.

Other small fragments of mosaic were found in the southeastern trench in the same room. One of these, a pink border preserved close to but not adjacent to the southern wall with a width of 11 *tesserae* (137 mm), was followed by an area of white of which 8 *tesserae* (85 mm) are preserved. A further small area of the same sequence lies a little to the west of this, against the same southern wall of the room. Another fragment of mosaic lies adjacent to and is cut by the western outer wall of the west aisle of the later basilica, which traverses the room at this point. The surface is fragmentary and disturbed, but appears to have incorporated black and pink triangles bordering an area of white which contained a complex stepped motif in white, black and pink; possibly a star-formation of the type found in the room adjacent to the east side of the octagonal building, at the far northwestern corner of the site (cf. Plate 10.9).

If this reading is correct and the motif of the central field was a tangent sequence of eight-pointed stars, the design of the pavement would have been similar to that in this northwestern room, with the colours of the white and pink outer framing bands reversed.

The nucleus of the pavement in this room is a strong creamy mortar with tile inclusions. The *tesserae* are set into a thin skim of whitish-pink mortar (3899) set over a thicker layer of pinkish-grey mortar (3900).

Eastern room of the marine entrance (Mosaic 7306)

A small trench opened up a window onto the floor in the northwestern corner of the eastern room of the marine entrance (mosaic 7306) (Plate 10.2). Here, what could be seen of the central area of the floor was filled with a field of tangent and intersecting circles, forming quatrefoils and staggered poised concave squares.¹ The leaves of the quatrefoils are white, while the concave squares are red enclosing small white concave squares. This field is framed by a border 0.24 m wide, made up of square saltire Solomon knots alternating with oblong panels framing an elongated red diamond enclosing a small black poised square, against a white ground. The one visible Solomon knot is made up of a white band interlooping with a pink band, each four *tesserae* wide and contoured in black. Outside this there is a plain border of pink, c. 0.12 m wide, and then a 0.18 m bedding strip to the wall.

The north and west walls of this room were revetted with a veneer of grey marble and there may have been an outer border of the same stone running round edge of the floor, framing the mosaic.

The mosaic is carefully founded and laid, with *tesserae* of c. 11 × 12 mm and 8–10 mm deep, set into a 5–7 mm skim of hard pinkish mortar with brick and other inclusions.

East wing, Room 5 (Mosaic 115)

Room 5 is a sub-rectangular space, with dimensions of 4.40–4.70 m north–south and 7.25–7.35 m east–west. The design of the mosaic pavement is symmetrical about its east–west axis (Fig. 10.3 and Plates 10.3–10.5). The overall design of the floor consists of a central square with a framed square emblema at its focus, adjoined to east and west by oblong rectangular panels. This central block is surrounded by bands of framing ornament, with the bands on opposing sides counter-oriented, so that the designs run continuously round all four sides of the room.

The emblema at the centre of the square central field is a square polychrome guilloche mat with four points on each side, 0.445 × 0.445 m.² Its ribbons are alternately red and grey-blue, consisting of single rows of black, pink, pale pink or white, white and black, in the one case, and black, pale grey-blue, white, white and black, in the other. White *tesserae* fill the interstices between the ribbons and the ground is white. This guilloche mat is framed by a double filet of black and then a double filet of white stones. This central feature is then surrounded by a far-larger square filled with a tri-axial pattern of adjacent isosceles triangles, counter-changed black and white, giving the effect of a chessboard pattern of triangles.³ The black triangles radiate out from the centre on all four sides (Plate 10.4 (a)). A stack of seven pink double-sized triangles tangent with black single triangles, each inscribed with a black crosslet, runs out along each of the four diagonal corner axes. This square field is also bordered by two double filets, in black then white. These, in turn, are framed by a three-strand guilloche. All three strands of the guilloche are white, contoured in black and set against a white ground. The guilloche-band is bordered by single filets of black. This frame is followed by two filets in white, then two in pink, followed by a single line of black stones. The pink filets continue to form an exiguous framework encompassing both the central panel and the adjoining panels to east and west.

These two large rectangular panels flanking the central square have dimensions of c. 1.385 × 2.055 m. The panel to the east is filled with an overall latchkey pattern of alternately reversed swastikas with single returns, with lozenges inscribed in the alternately vertical and horizontal spaces (giving the effect of a grid of tangent lozenges).⁴ The design is outlined in single or double black filets on a white ground, and the lozenges are pink and are inscribed with a serrated square in black and white reticulate checkerboard. The interstices between the swastikas and the lozenges are filled with irregular pennant-shaped configurations in black (Plate 10.4 (b)). The western panel contains a close variant on this pattern, with the black pennant-shaped filling devices omitted and with smaller serrated chequerboard squares in the lozenges (Plate 10.5 (b)).

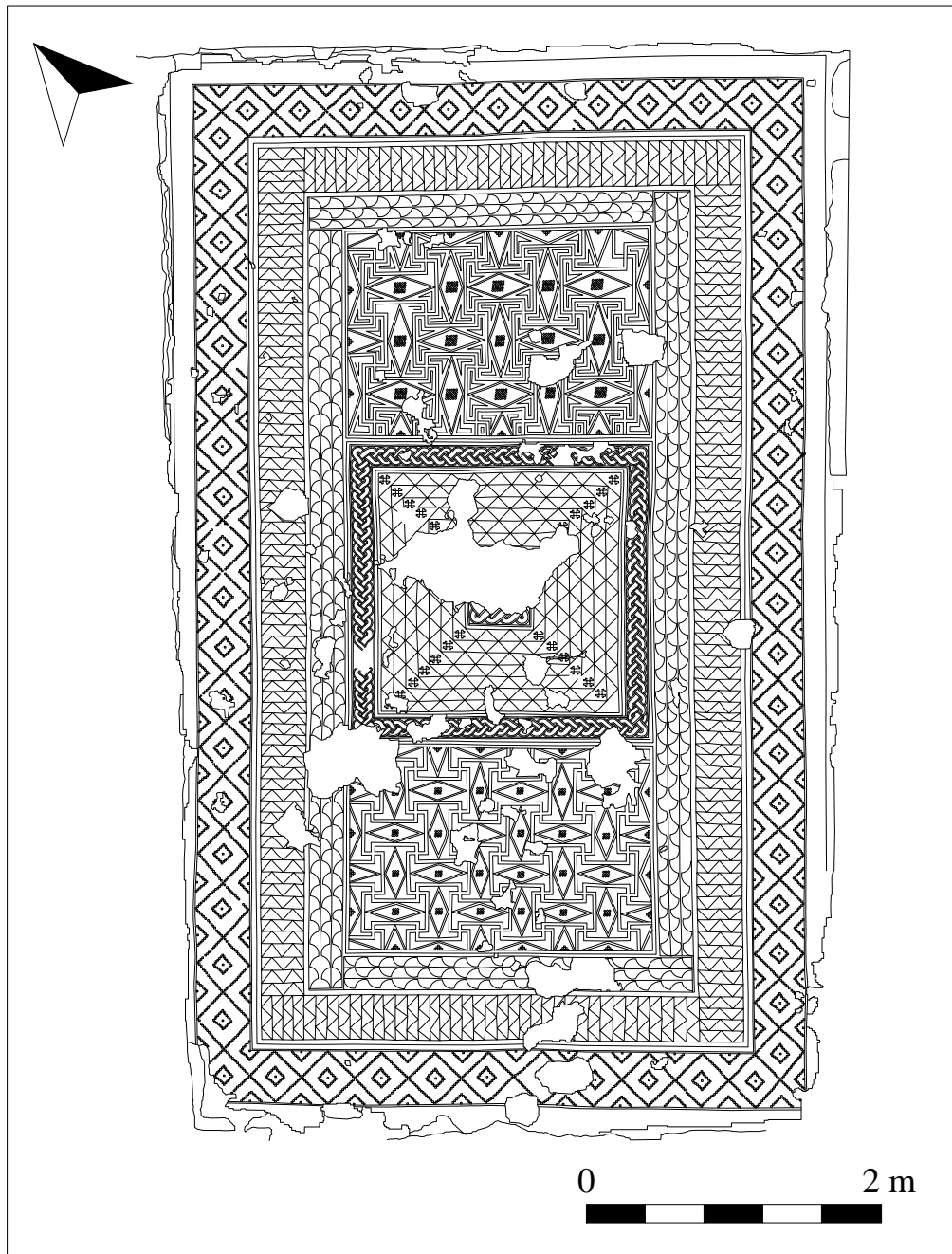


Figure 10.3. Plan of the mosaic pavement in Room 5 (Mosaic 115)

The three panels which form this central unit are set within a three-part frame (Plate 10.5 (b)). First comes a lattice-pattern of adjacent scales, the colours counter-changed, black and white (0.20 m wide);⁵ next a triple filet of white; then a band of juxtaposed tangent isosceles triangles, black, white and pink (0.295 m wide); followed by two triple filet borders, white, then pink.⁶ The main outer border which follows is a broad band carrying a simple diagonal lattice of serrated simple black filets on a white ground (36 *tesserae* = 0.36–0.37 m wide). Each resulting poised square cell encloses a parallel serrated square, contoured in black and then with single rows of red

and pink framing a field of white with a black stone at its centre.⁷ Half squares of this type are set in the triangular spaces between the complete median cells. This band is framed with a single black filet on either side. Between this band and the wall there is first a strip of 13 pink *tesserae* (134 mm wide), followed by a strip of 5 white *tesserae* (50 mm wide).

The pavement is well laid, with c. 10 × 10 mm *tesserae*, set c. 5 mm apart. In some areas the surface shows signs of considerable wear, but it is not cut by post-holes and has not suffered any other particularly destructive interventions.

Painted plaster still adheres to the walls of the room

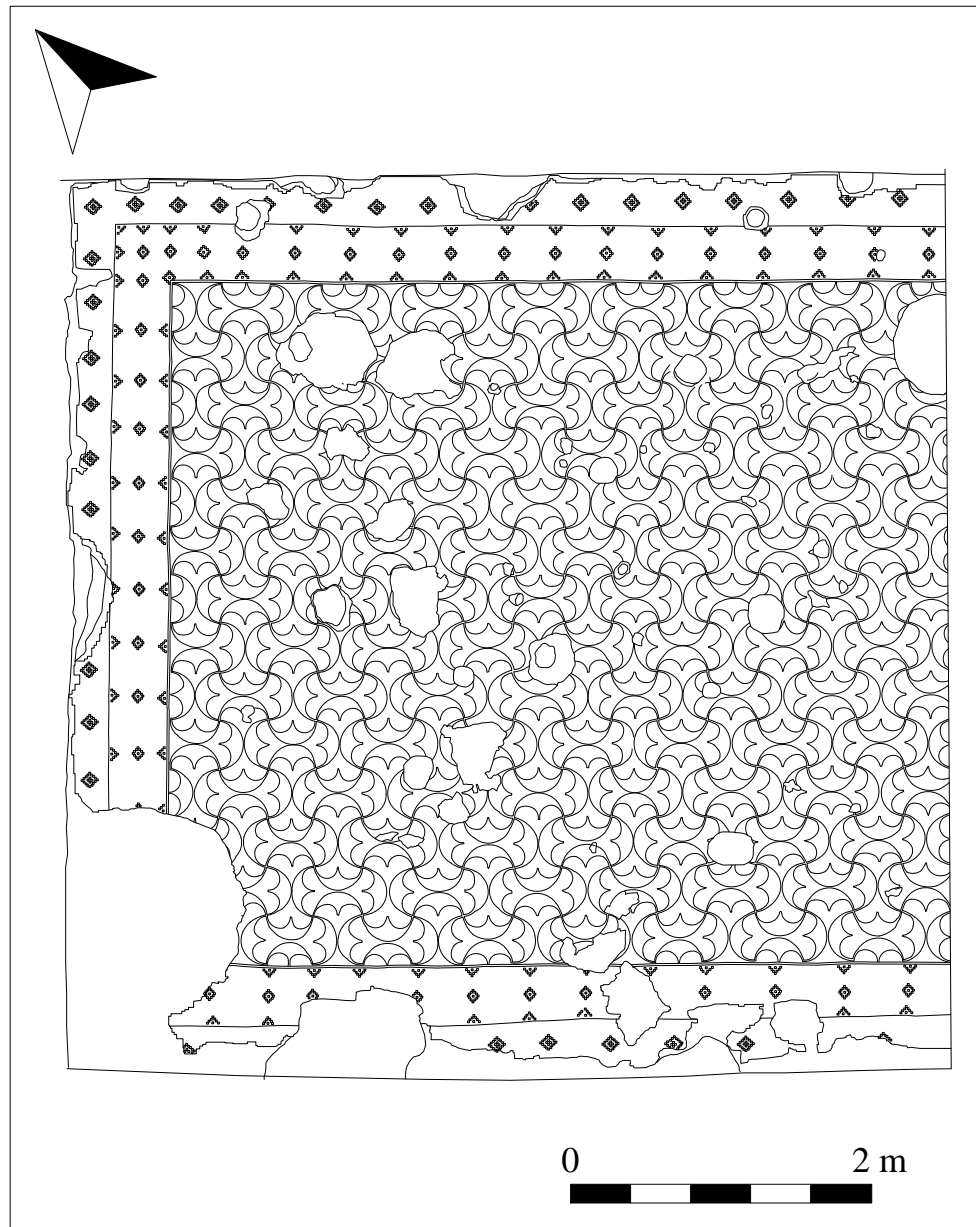


Figure 10.4. Plan of the mosaic pavement in Room 3 (Mosaic 3499)

in places. Two phases are preserved, each consisting of *arriccio* (mortar) and *intonaco* (plaster), four strata in all. Reddish-orange paint is preserved on the uppermost surface.

East wing, Room 3 (Mosaic 3499)

Room 3 is a sub-rectangular space with dimensions of 6.92–7.03 m north–south and 5.98–6.03 m east–west. The excavation of the mosaic in this room was not complete; a strip (1 m wide) along the south wall remains covered (Fig. 10.4 and Plates 10.6–10.7). The overall design of the floor consists of a field of running peltas; that is a scheme of tangent black peltas in alternately upright and recumbent confronted pairs, on a white ground, extending over the

whole central area of the room.⁸ The peltas are 0.33 m long and 0.15–0.16 m wide, and narrow to fine points (Plate 10.7 (a)). The central field is framed first by a single line of black *tesserae* and then by a broad, outer white border set with small stepped poised squares (Plate 10.7 (b)). To the west this border is 26 *tesserae* wide (0.35 m), to the north 29 *tesserae* (0.37 m), and to the east 29 *tesserae* (0.38 m). The stepped poised squares, in black and white and pink, with sides consisting of four *tesserae*, are set at intervals of c. 0.43 m. Half-squares of the same type are set along the inner and outer edges of this border, in alignment with the full squares in the interior. Finally, there is an outer band of pink *tesserae* extending to the walls of the room, at least 23 *tesserae* on the western side (0.34–0.37 m), 19–24 on the north side (0.32–0.36 m), and 23–26 on the

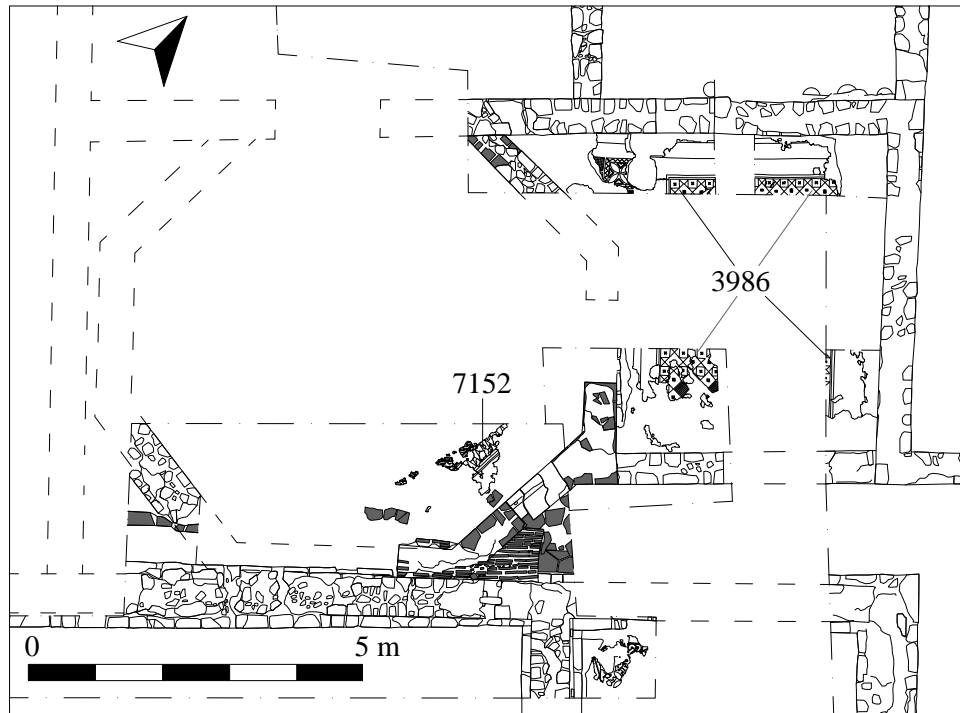


Figure 10.5. Plan of the mosaic in the Octagonal Building (Mosaic 7152) and of the mosaic pavement adjacent to the northeast corner of the Octagonal Building (Mosaic 3986)

eastern side (0.31–0.33 m). This outermost pink border is also charged with poised stepped squares, slightly larger than before with sides of five *tesserae*, set in staggered sequence with respect to the squares in the inner border.

The nucleus of the floor was a hard pinkish plaster with inclusions including tile fragments and tile-dust. The *tesserae* were set in a 20 mm skim of plaster laid over this foundation. The overall thickness of the two layers of plaster and the overlying *tesserae* was c. 90 mm. The *tesserae* have sides of c. 10–15 mm. Traces of wall-plaster, one phase each of *arriccio* and *intonaco*, were preserved in the northeast corner of the room, trowelled down onto the surface of the mosaic. The mosaic probably dates to the mid-3rd century AD.

East wing, Room 4 (Mosaic 3481)

Room 4 is an oblong rectangular room, constructed on a terrace immediately to the south of Room 3, at a 0.50 m higher elevation. Its width, north to south, on its eastern side is 3.58 m and on its western side 3.42 m, while its length from east to west, as far as has been excavated, is 5.50 m; a strip (0.80 m wide) along the west wall remains covered. The floor was laid with a mosaic that is preserved in a very fragmentary state (see Fig. 4.82). The central area, of which little remains, appears to be very similar to that of the adjacent Room 3, on the lower terrace to the north: a field of running peltas, black on a white ground, apparently extending uninterrupted over the width and length of the room.⁹ The scale, however, is reduced: the

tesserae are smaller than those used in the lower room, 10 mm or less on each side, and the peltas are only 140 mm long and 70 mm wide. The central field is framed by two rows of black *tesserae*, followed by a white band made up of 29 *tesserae* (0.295 m) and finally a 0.14–0.20 m band of pink which extends to the wall. The outer pink border is charged with small stepped poised black squares, three *tesserae* to each side, set at intervals of c. 0.29 m. Between these, along the inside contours of the pink border, are black poised half-squares, with baselines of white. These border-schemes are best preserved along the eastern and southern walls.

The make-up of the pavement is a hard mortar nucleus with stony inclusions. The *tesserae* are set into a skim of plaster 15–20 mm thick laid over this base. Some wall-plaster, with traces of pink pigment, is preserved on the southern wall, running down behind the mosaic pavement.

The Phase 3b mosaics (early to mid-4th century AD)

The octagonal building (Mosaic 7152)

A small area of the mosaic floor of the octagonal building was uncovered (mosaic 7152) (Fig. 10.5 and Plate 10.8). This is located close to the east wall. What survives is a fragment of the outer borders which framed the central field. Starting from the wall, there is first a now-bare strip of bedding which may have been covered with marble, then three horizontal rows of white *tesserae*, followed by a

wide band of white in which the cubes are laid in reticulate order. This band is bordered on its inner side by two rows of white, three of red and three of white. There follows a band of trichrome dog's tooth, composed of elongated triangles, white on the interior side, and alternating black and red on the exterior; then a narrow band of dog's tooth, black on white; and finally a four-stranded guilloche, with white ribbons contoured in black against a white ground. No trace of the central field was found.

Room adjacent to the octagonal building (Mosaic 3986)

At the far northwest corner of the site, four trenches opened up areas of an outlying room of the *domus*, adjacent to the northeast corner of the octagonal building. The fragments of pavement revealed belonged to two schemes, from different areas of the same room.

Elements of two distinct designs were preserved against the western end of the north wall of the room (Fig. 10.5 and Plate 10.9). In the eastern sector, the extreme outer borders of the pavement consist of 7 rows of pink *tesserae* (100 mm) abutting the north wall, followed by 19 rows of white (240 mm), 21 rows of pink (250 mm), 3 rows of white (37 mm) and 2 rows of black (26 mm), and then the design proper. The preserved scheme consists of the outer edge of a field of diagonal chess-board pattern, with pink poised squares charged with orthogonal chequerboard squares of black poised *tesserae*, 3 × 3, alternating with black poised squares inscribed with smaller tangent upright white squares charged with black crosslets, resulting in black isosceles triangles. The design is read most easily as a tangent sequence of eight-pointed stars formed on large poised squares, resulting in smaller interstitial squares. This appears to be the same design as that used in the east portico (mosaic 3838).

In the sector to the west there are the same outer borders: 10 rows of pink *tesserae* (125 mm) followed by 19 rows of white (230 mm). The patterned design of the floor then starts, set in some 0.25 m to the south of the corresponding scheme on the eastern sector of the floor. The design seems to have consisted of large squares, possibly alternating with clusters of small quarter-size squares, both probably carrying a variety of motifs. One large square, in the corner, is more or less completely preserved, together with fragments of the edges of two adjoining squares. The preserved panel features a large quatrefoil of white lentoid petals with black contours serrated with pink *tesserae*, set within a square defined with a single line of black. This is framed by a white border, with a saw-tooth of serrated black triangles running along the outer edges. A quarter-size square, in the adjoining area to the west, seems to have been filled with a pattern of diagonal serrated bands formed of tangent poised square clusters of four *tesserae*, in rows of white, pink and black.

Another, longer section of the design with a tangent sequence of eight-pointed stars formed on large poised

squares was revealed at a point further to the east along the north side of the room; another, still larger, area was excavated on the southern side of the room.

An area of pavement uncovered in the southwest corner of this room was laid with the same scheme, where the pattern is clearly preserved: eight-pointed tangent stars formed on a reticulated design of poised squares, red and black, the red squares containing a small serrated chequerboard orthogonal square in white and black, the black squares enclosing large orthogonal white squares set with back crosslets of five poised *tesserae*. In one case here a black square is replaced by a serrated rainbow pattern of bands of tangent-poised squares in clusters of four red white and black cubes. The borders of this central design, from the wall in, consist of pink (9+ rows of *tesserae*, 130 mm), followed by white (at least 15 rows of *tesserae*, 195 mm), then pink (20 rows, 250 mm), followed by 3 rows of white and 2 of black, which immediately frame the central design; in other words, more or less uniform with the other surviving fragments of the pavement of this room.

A further strip of the border and the edge of the central design was uncovered against the north wall of the room. Traces of plaster, apparently cindered from burning, adhered to the north wall. The mosaic probably dates from the early 4th century AD.

Discussion

In the absence of reliable dating evidence – ceramic, numismatic or artifactual – from the make-up layers of the pavements in the *domus*, there are few available indices for determining the chronologies, relative or absolute, of the mosaics. The designs used by the mosaics enjoyed long lives in the repertoires of craftsmen active in the Balkans and neighbouring territories in the Roman and Late Roman periods, and most of the motifs continued to be used until at least the beginning of the 5th century; these include ivy-trail, fields of tangent upright and recumbent running peltas, lattice-patterns of adjacent parti-coloured scales, guilloches, grids of serrated filets containing small serrated squares or florets, and latchkey patterns of alternately reversed swastikas with lozenges in the resulting spaces.¹⁰ At Butrint itself, all these elements are present in the mosaics of the Triconch *domus*, from phases between the 3rd and the beginning of the 5th century,¹¹ although by the end of the 5th century and first half of the 6th, the time of the pavements in the basilica on the Vrina Plain and the Baptistry in Butrint itself, a rather different idiom, and a different repertoire, was being deployed.¹²

Another possible chronological index lies in the forms of the *tesserae* used and the manner in which they are laid to construct shapes. On the whole the *tesserae* in these floors are fairly regular cubes, although triangular stones and even irregular splinters are sometimes used in particular angled formations. They are laid with some precision and expertise, in general so as to follow the contours of, and complement, the designs they make up. Their lay tends

also to have its own internal structure, supporting but independent of the design. For the most part these structures are quite simple horizontal or regular undulating courses or reticulate nets of *tesserae*, readily apparent in mosaic 7152 (see Plate 10.8), while in other cases they mimic and develop the contours of a particular design, as in mosaic 3838, where the white cubes of the white ground assume tight imitative formations around the sinuous stem of the ivy-trail and its swelling leaves (see Plate 10.1). Although there is some difference in the laying of specific floors over the complex, with particular care being accorded to certain, perhaps very visible, spaces like the portico of the peristyle, there appears to be general uniformity of practice. The manner of laying is broadly cognate with that of the earlier phases of the Triconch Palace at Butrint, floors which have been dated to the 3rd and 4th centuries.¹³ The floors of rooms 25 and 16 in the Triconch Palace, the West Vestibule and the West Portico of the Peristyle, which can be assigned with some confidence to the end of the 4th century, are markedly different in their lay. Here the *tesserae* are often irregular in shape and are set with considerable irregularity, with few regular lines and no attempt to create structured sequences of stones.¹⁴ Stones are set in loose order to create areas and accents of colour, rather than to define and articulate graphic designs. This marks the advent of a new colour aesthetic, very different from the practice a century earlier and from that of the craftsmen who worked on the Vrina Plain *domus*. In the forms assumed by motifs, there is also a difference between the floors on the Vrina Plain and those of the Triconch *domus*. To take an example, the

peltas of Room 3 are considerably fuller and more surely formed in themselves and in relation to each other than those which similarly cover the central field in Room 25, the West Vestibule, in the Triconch *domus*, a floor of the late 4th century (Plate 10.10 a, b);¹⁵ they are also somewhat more surely and regularly formed than the peltas in the *triclinium* (Room 24) at the Triconch, a floor from earlier in the 4th century, if not from the later 3rd (Plate 10.10 c).¹⁶ From what we know of practice in the region, the floors of the Vrina Plain *domus* would not sit uncomfortably in a 3rd- or possibly early 4th-century context.

Notes

- 1 Prudhomme 1985, pl. 46d.
- 2 Prudhomme 1985, pl. 135.
- 3 Prudhomme 1985, pl. 198e.
- 4 See Prudhomme 1985, pls 166e and 189e, for variants of this design.
- 5 Prudhomme 1985, pl. 217d.
- 6 Prudhomme 1985, pl. 198c.
- 7 Prudhomme 1985, pl. 124.
- 8 Prudhomme 1985, pl. 222d.
- 9 Prudhomme 1985, pl. 222d.
- 10 Dunbabin 1999.
- 11 Mitchell 2011.
- 12 Mitchell 2004b; 2008.
- 13 Mitchell 2011, 231–51.
- 14 Mitchell 2011, 252–71.
- 15 Mitchell 2011, figs 7.42–43, colour pls 28–29.
- 16 Mitchell 2011, fig. 7.25, colour pl. 18.

11 The mosaic pavement of the basilica

*John Mitchell*¹

Introduction

The nave and sanctuary of the basilica are paved with mosaic, with a uniform design and programme that extends over both areas (Figs 11.1 and 11.2; see also Fig. 6.3). The stylobate of a screen, running across the church,

separates the two spaces and in the sanctuary the field of mosaic encompasses the stone floor-plate of the altar. The walled-up intervals between the piers of the arcades were not dismantled and excavated; however, to judge from the sections, the mosaic did not continue into these, but gave



Figure 11.1. View of the nave and sanctuary mosaics, looking to the south

way to slabs of limestone (see Fig. 7.18). The floor surface of the two side aisles was nowhere preserved, only patches of a plaster bedding-surface in poor condition; as in the intercolumniations, this probably supported a flooring of stone slabs.

The mosaic *tesserae* are laid in a bed of pinkish mortar with powdered brick inclusions, c. 15 mm thick. This is supported by a *rudus*, a raft of tightly packed roof-tiles set irregularly, mostly at acute angles slanting off the vertical. The *tesserae* are c. 10 mm square and are, for the most part, cut from limestone of various colours: shades of white, variants of pink from light to mid, ochre, lavender, pale blue, mid-grey-blue and black. Bright red-orange *tesserae* are made from tiles, and yellow ones are of glass (Plate 11.1).

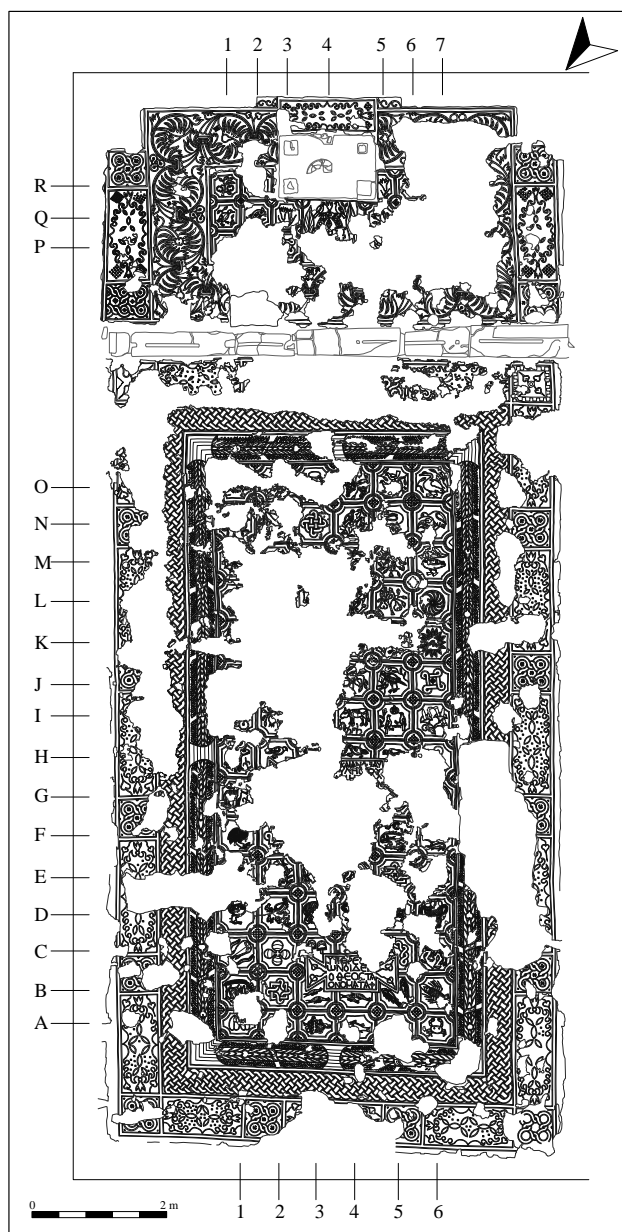


Figure 11.2. Plan of the basilica mosaic

In the nave a single composition extends the whole length of the floor (Plate 11.2). The principal field consists of a long rectangular grid of irregular octagons forming medallions, the octagons filled with an abundant variety of motifs including sea-creatures, birds, terrestrial beasts, fruit, flowers and trees. Superimposed on this are two large tablets, *tabulae ansatae*, carrying inscriptions in Greek. The central gridded field is surrounded by an elaborate three-fold frame.

At the northern end of the nave, directly in front of the threshold, the two axial compartments are filled with a bunch of grapes confronted by a large fish; to judge from their composition and location the two were designed to be seen as a pair. These introduce a variety of sea-creatures – fish, a crab, a lobster, shrimps – together with mushrooms, flowers, a stag and two cruciform designs surrounding the smaller of the two inscriptions, which reads:

ὕπερ εὐ[χῆς] ὧν οἶδ[εν] ὁ θεὸς τὰ ὀνόματα

in fulfilment of the vow (prayer) of those whose names God knows (Plate 11.3).

Beyond this the selection of creatures shifts to large feline quadrupeds, a cock and a hen with her chicks and other birds, some fish, a basket of flowers and further cruciform devices (Plate 11.4). At the mid-point of the nave a second large *tabula ansata* with a now largely destroyed inscription, but including four preserved words:

ὕπερ μνήμης] καὶ ἀναπαύ[σεως τῆς δο]ύλης σου [...]
α?μ?η [...]λ[...]ν[...]

[For the memory] and rest/repose of Thy (maid) servant [...],

is surrounded by a more symmetrically ordered group of animals, sheep on the left and birds above, facing in towards the inscription (Plate 11.5).² The size of this tablet and the ordered disposition of the animals which attend it suggest that this was the more extensive and important of the two inscriptions on the floor.

To judge from the surviving panels – a third are lost – the rest of the nave, that is the half nearer to the sanctuary, was filled with birds, trees bearing fruit, a variety of quadrupeds, and a number of rectangular and circular ornamental configurations (Plate 11.6). The sequence abutting the threshold to the sanctuary consists of birds and trees, and a chalice and a vine stem with two prominent bunches of grapes, set side by side, on the central axis (Plate 11.7). It would appear then that the disposition of motifs over the floor is not random. Rather, there is a somewhat informal but nevertheless marked progression from a diverting and welcoming assemblage of sea-creatures at the entrance, past feral quadrupeds and domestic birds, with a more ordered group of animals and birds clustered about the principal votive inscription, then on to a large assembly of fruit-bearing trees, flowers, birds and animals. These culminate in a large chalice, a krater with large curling S-shaped handles, and a grape-bearing vine on the threshold to the sanctuary, announcing the eucharistic space around

the altar. A telling detail of this progression is the absence of flowers or plants accompanying animals in the first four registers of the floor and their increasing presence and prominence in the direction of the sanctuary.

This central field in the nave is framed by a sequence of three broad borders: the outer one consisting of panels containing alternately a quatrefoil of two interlooped curvilinear squares forming large and small circles and an elaborately cusped and bejewelled cartouche – a variant on the so-called ‘silver-plate’ motif; the middle border a six-stranded guilloche; and the inner one a barbed garland of adjacent laurel leaves superimposed in threes, with spaced fruits and flowers and an obliquely entwined ribbon (Plate 11.8).

The pavement in the sanctuary is uniform with the nave in idiom and colour, but richer and more varied in design (Plate 11.9). The central feature, directly in front of the altar, is an arched aedicule, surmounted by two small birds and flanked by two brightly coloured trees resembling cypresses. The lower part of this composition is destroyed, but from what remains it appears that within the arch a single plant grew, terminating in a prominent red flower. Above this flower a lamp burns, suspended from the apex of the arch. This central panel is embedded in a grid similar to that of the nave. Much of this has been destroyed but the remaining octagons show that it was filled with trees, plants, birds, fish and ornamental devices, arranged in more or less symmetrical order, fronting and framing the altar. This grid is in turn framed by a magnificent curling plant *rinseau*, each scroll issuing from a fluted trumpet and terminating in a prominent brightly coloured fruit, with a profusion of long sinuous leaves growing out from the concave interior sides of the stems. A ‘silver-plate’ cartouche, uniform with the ones in the outermost border in the nave but simpler in detail, is laid against each of the three walls of the sanctuary; those on the two lateral walls are flanked by quatrefoils of interlooped curvilinear squares.

Nave: central field

The central field is filled with an outlined orthogonal grid of adjacent irregular octagons, with four concave sides, forming circles.³ Each of these circles encloses a poised serrated square made up of a black-and-white or red-and-white chequerboard – the disposition of squares in the two colours follows no obvious sequence. The framing edges of each cell of the grid are in two colour-combinations, with two adjacent sides of one colour combination opposing two others in another combination. Each cell is divided from the next by a median red line and then the colours of each side or strut are either a combination of single rows of black, white, pink, deep red and black, and black, white, pale pink, pink and black, or a combination of black, yellowish-white, cloudy grey-white, grey-blue and black, and black, yellowish-white, pale ochre, yellow and black. This creates the effect of a lighted and a shaded

side of each framed cell and so imparts a sense of relief to the pavement. There is no rigid order to the disposition of frames of particular colours over the floor, but there is a tendency to have uniform frames in one row and for the sequence to be reversed in the next. The rich assemblage of beasts, birds, sea-creatures, trees, flowering plants and abstract devices within the octagons of the grid are all outlined and articulated in black and are set against yellowish-white grounds. Starting at the northeast corner of the floor (the corner to the left of the main axial northern door) and proceeding from east to west (from left to right) and up the nave (from north to south), the motifs in the individual compartments are as follows:

Row A: 1). Two adjacent pieces of fruit of an unidentified variety, each parti-coloured red and pink. The upper right part of the panel is destroyed.

2). Largely destroyed.

3). A stem bearing 13 grapes, with red petals and pale pink centres and auras, set horizontally, in serried diminishing sequence. There are some small areas of damage.

4). A pale blue fish swimming to the left; the rear of the head is contoured in orange-red. The forepart of the head is lost.

5). Largely destroyed.

6). A magnificent crab with a deep-red shell, lightening to pink in the centre, with pink claws and six angled black legs. The eyes, each with a black *tessera* surrounded by four white stones, are set into the shell towards the front. The panel is well preserved (Fig. 11.3 and Plate 11.10).

Row B: 1). A grazing antlered deer, facing right, with exaggeratedly large hooves, the body pale blue, with a striking speckled band along the back, made up of black, blue, yellow and white *tesserae* set chequerboard fashion. The panel is damaged along the bottom and in the lower-right corner, resulting in the destruction of the lower parts of the front legs and the muzzle of the animal and much of a plant on which it is grazing.

2). A well-preserved curvilinear poised square interlooped with a regular square. The ribbon forming the regular square consists of single rows of *tesserae*, black, white, pink, orange and black, that of the curvilinear square, black, white, sky blue, median blue and black.

3). Two shrimps, striped red and pink.

4). Two similar shrimps.

5). Two fish, possibly representing bream, with blue bodies lightening to yellow at the centre, speckled along their length with red and with a white contour to the belly. The gills are defined by prominent crescents of red contoured in black, and the mouths are open and pink. These three fields, 9–11, with shrimps and fish, are reduced to irregular shapes by the inscribed *tabula ansata* which lies over this part of the floor.

6). A large crustacean, possibly a flat or slipper lobster, banded black, pink and white, with a red tail and ten bright red legs, and prominent eyes. There is an area of damage in the lower right corner of this panel (Fig. 11.3 and Plates 11.11 and 11.12).

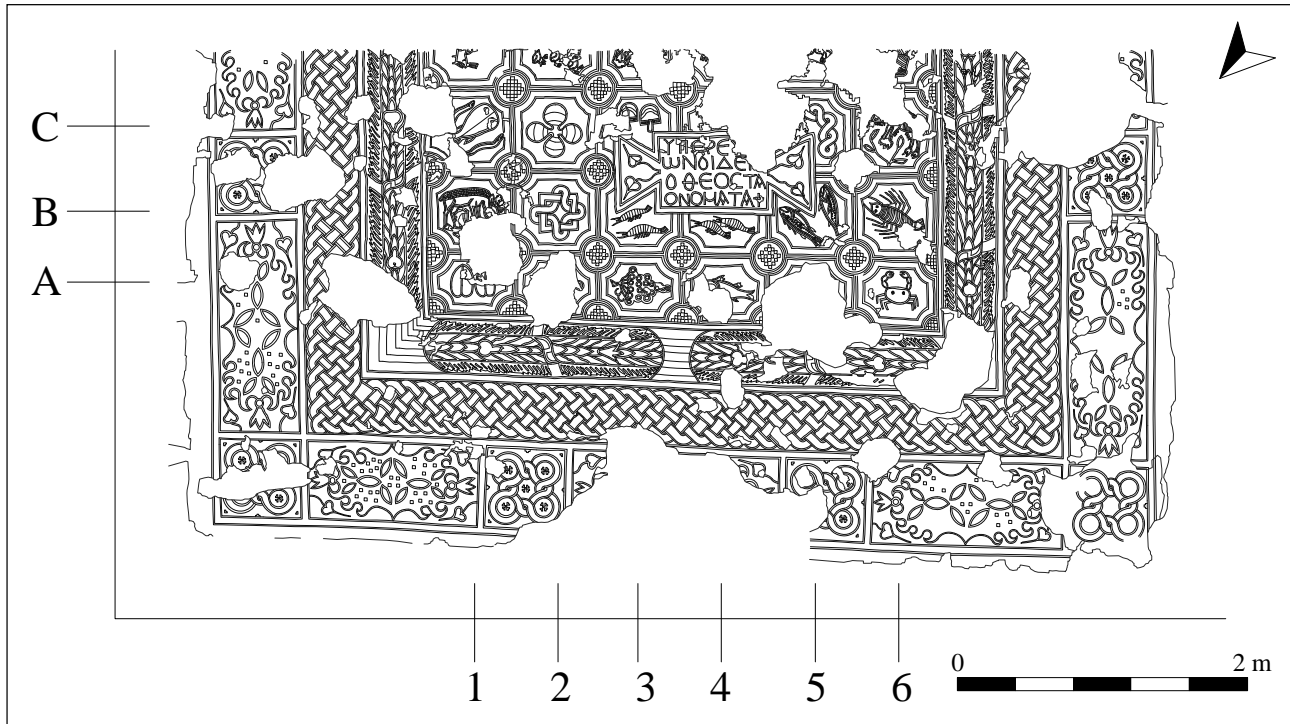


Figure 11.3. Detail of Rows A–C of the nave mosaic

Partly overlying rows B and C and somewhat offset to the right (west) is the tablet bearing the first votive inscription, a rectangle flanked by large flaring dovetail terminals (Plate 11.13). This is outlined with a border consisting of two rows of pink *tesserae* sandwiched between single rows of black. The inscription, in large capital letters on a white ground, is described in black, with *tesserae* in single file. A pair of fleurons, parti-coloured pink and white, on long diverging black stems, embellishes each of the two ansate terminals.

Row C: 1). A large flat fish of the flounder type, parti-coloured grey-blue and cloudy-white, with a huge club-shaped forward body and head and little black eyes, flanked by two large eels which are described with two rows of grey-blue stones and one of cloudy-white. All three creatures swim up towards the upper right corner of the panel. The tails of the fish and eels in the lower left corner of the panel have been damaged and the surface repaired in antiquity with blue-grey *tesserae*, without heed to the design. At this point, the frame has also been repaired, generally respecting the form and colours of the original. 2). A large quatrefoil, with globular waisted leaves, coloured rainbow-wise, red at the centre with bands of pale mauve and white on the foils. 3). Two mushrooms, their bells with arcuated bands modulating from deep red through orange-red to pink, with pale pink and white gills; the stems are pale blue. This irregular panel is damaged on its left side. 4). Largely destroyed. 5). A simple guilloche twist, following the formation of the

panel, the ribbon modelled from white through pale pink to strong pink. The left part of the panel is destroyed. The three panels, C3–5, like their neighbours, B3–5 immediately to the west, are partly overlaid by the inscriptional tablet.

6). A large pale blue quadruped, facing inwards, with cloven hooves and prominent black bristles rising from its back and on its snout, probably a boar, standing over a spreading plant with four pale blue leaves. There is considerable damage in the upper part of this panel (Fig. 11.13 and Plate 11.14).

Row D: 1). A cockerel in profile facing right; its body is elaborately coloured, pale blue, pink, white, black and yellow; its legs and feet yellow. There is considerable damage in the upper part of the panel and the head and much of the tail of the bird are lost.

2). A hen, in left profile, with five chicks at her feet, also somewhat damaged. The hen is pale blue with a mauve wing, and with white, pink and yellow on the neck, blue and yellow bands along the body which continue into the tail, a yellow beak and an orange-red comb. The chicks are yellow. The panel has suffered some damage.

3). Preserved is the rear end of a large cat, possibly a tiger, moving to the right, striped white, pale blue and yellow on the body, with some pink on the hind legs. The panel has suffered considerable damage on its right-hand side.

4). An extensively damaged panel; only the head of another large feline, possibly a lion, roaring with open mouth and bared pink teeth, is preserved, confronting the tiger in the previous panel. The head is coloured blue, pink and white.

5). Another very damaged panel. Preserved are the

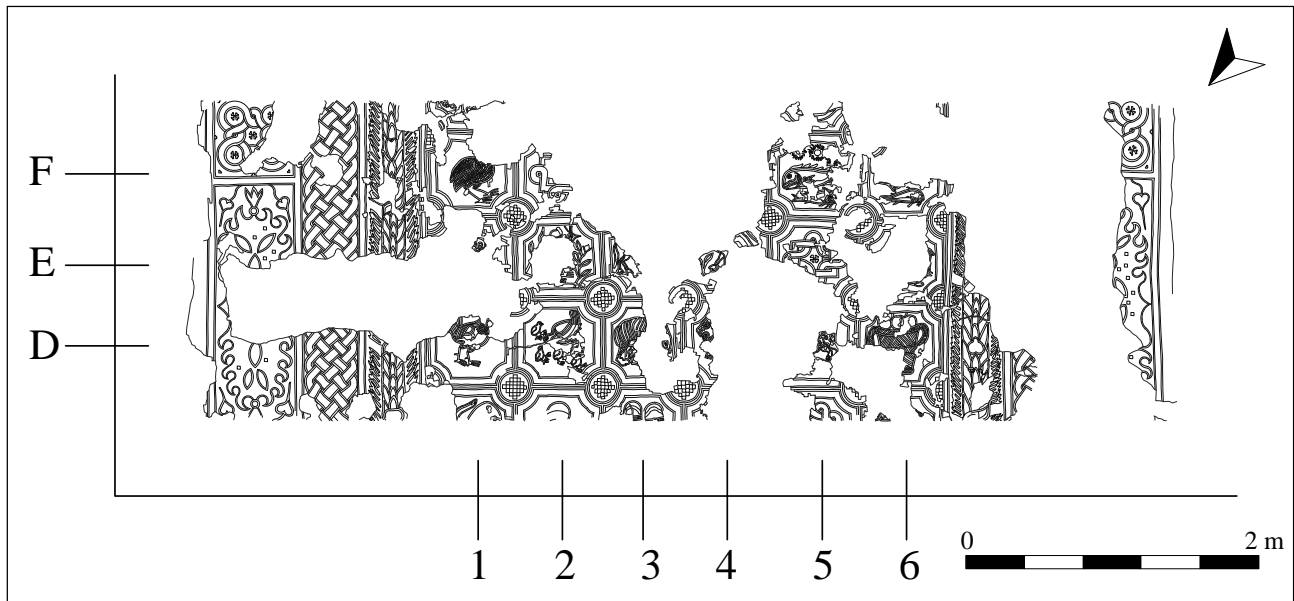


Figure 11.4. Detail of Rows D–F of the nave mosaic

hindquarters of a third large quadruped, coloured white with black spots and mauve legs, possibly a leopard, running to the left.

6). A large wicker basket with rounded handles of twisted rods, filled with flowers coloured red, pink, yellow and white. The basket is made of yellow rods or coils worked in diagonal configurations, and is girt by three pale blue horizontal twisted rings. The panel has suffered damage, particularly in its lower left corner (Fig. 11.4 and Plate 11.15).

Row E: 1). This panel is largely destroyed. Preserved in the upper right centre are the remains of a cluster of flowers or fruits, each with a pink *tessera* ringed by red in a grey-blue matrix and fragments of a white ground.

2). A bird facing right stands in a field of flowering plants. The centre of the composition in this panel is lost; only the pale blue crested head and the feet of the bird survive. The plants have black stems, long pale blue lanceolate leaves, and pink dart-like flowers with brick-red extremities.

3). The centre and right-hand side of this panel are lost. Preserved are the hindquarters of an ungulate quadruped, possibly a horse, in right-profile. The legs are coloured pink and yellow.

4). Another extensively damaged panel with a yellow hoofed quadruped facing the previous animal, in left-profile; a plant with pale grey leaves grows up next to the one preserved leg.

5). A curvilinear poised square interlooping with a regular rectangular square, similar to panel B2. The ribbon forming the former consists of single rows of *tesserae*, black, white, pink, red and black, that of the latter of black, white, yellow, yellow and black. At the centre is a black floret of four chevrons. The panel has suffered substantial damage at the bottom and on the right-hand side.

6). Another very damaged panel. Only the right-hand edge

of the composition is preserved, with what appear to be the tail and the back contour of the rear leg of a further quadruped, which faced in towards the centre of the floor. The tail is filled with slivers of pale grey and white stone (Fig. 11.4 and Plate 11.16).

Row F: 1). A well-characterized guinea-fowl facing to the right, well preserved except for the head, which is destroyed. The body is laid in black and white *tesserae* set in irregular chequerboard fashion. The lower contour of the wing is defined in red. The upper right-hand corner of the panel is lost.

2). A square with lateral loops forming axial eyelets. The ribbon forming the device consists of single rows of black, red, pink, white and black *tesserae*. The centre and right-hand parts of this panel are destroyed.

3). Completely destroyed.

4). Completely destroyed.

5). Two fish swimming in opposite directions beneath three suns or stars. Their bodies are pink with a red interior upper contour and some interior articulation in white, black and a little red; a series of raked pink fins runs along the back of the upper fish. Their eyes have prominent white corneas. The suns/stars have orange-red centres framed in black and are ringed by black rays tapering to points. The panel has suffered some damage.

6). A panel very similar to the previous one, only the lower half preserved, again with two fish swimming in contrary directions. The lower fish is complete but only the lower contour of the larger one above is preserved. The surviving fish is modelled from deep pink on its back to a pale shade of the same colour on its belly, and is contoured in black and red above and black and white below. Both fish have small pink raked fins. The composition has room for a further feature above the fish, at the top of the panel, but this area is not preserved (Fig. 11.4 and Plate 11.17).

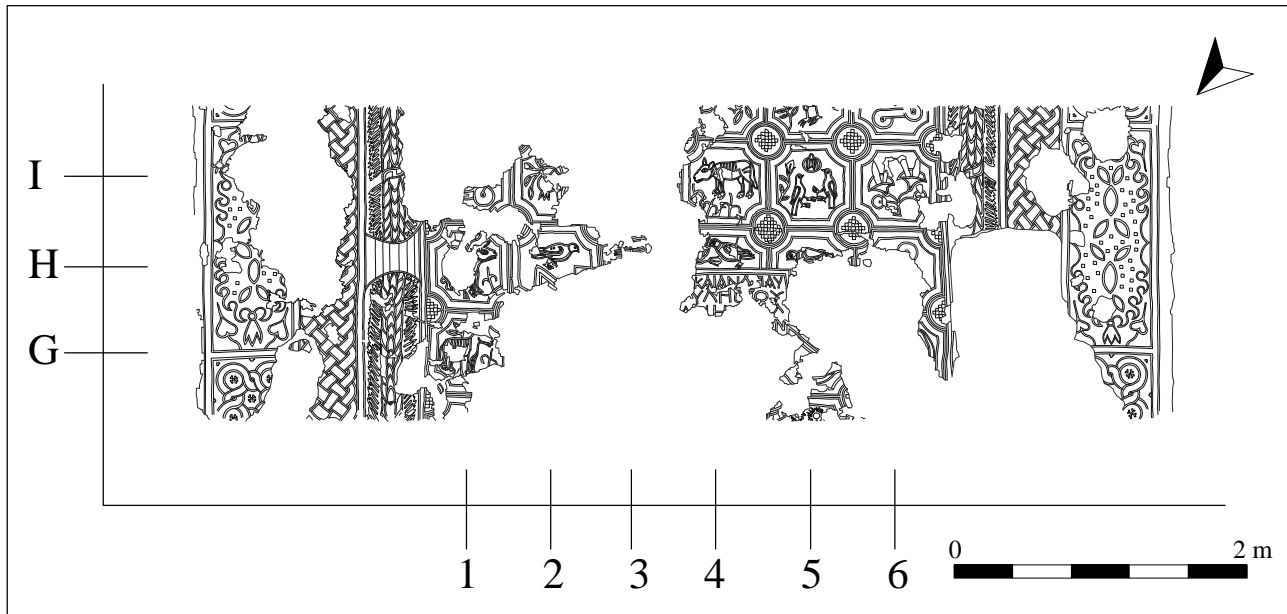


Figure 11.5. Detail of Rows G–I of the nave mosaic

Row G: 1). A quadruped, apparently a sheep, facing right, stands in front of a tree. The body of the animal is set with vertical lines of white alternating with one or more rows of cloudy-white *tesserae*. The tree has a black trunk and large white leaves. A small plant grows up beneath the mouth of the animal. There is some damage to the head and in the upper right corner of the panel, also in the lower right corner.

2). Completely destroyed.

3). Completely destroyed.

4). Completely destroyed.

5). An extensively damaged panel composed around the lower part of the right *ansa* of an inscribed tablet. At the lower right are plant stems running across the composition and further to the left, two lanceolate leaves. It would appear that this truncated panel bore a plant stem with leaves and probably flowers.

6). Another very damaged panel. At the far right the long cloudy-white tail of an animal facing to the left is preserved. The body seems to have been of the same colour. This may have been a second sheep looking across to its counterpart at the other end of this row (Fig. 11.5 and Plate 11.18).

Row H: 1). A cloudy-white ungulate quadruped, again doubtless a sheep, facing to the right. A tree with a black trunk and pale blue leaves rises behind the animal. A small plant grows up beneath its mouth. As usual, the eye has a black pupil, white cornea and a black outer contour. There is an area of loss encompassing much of the body of the animal.

2). A completely preserved small bird in right profile, above the left-hand end of the *ansa* of the inscribed tablet. The bird's body is laid in now-decayed yellow glass *tesserae*, articulated with yellow stone, white and red. The wing and tail are defined in black. The back and the head are pink,

with slivers of white outlining the forehead. The black pupil of the eye is surrounded by chips of white stone. A single row of red describes a collar about the bird's neck. The legs and feet are red, with three toes and a rear spur. 3). A severely damaged panel with another small bird facing to the right. Much of the body and tail survive in a battered state but the head is lost. The tail is in alternating rows of black and pale yellow *tesserae*.

4). A third small bird, in left profile, facing a small plant with a pale blue leaf on one stem, and on another a chalice-like flower with a red apex. The bird is rendered with the same colours as the others in this row but without the yellow interior articulation.

5). A panel with severe losses in its lower half. Here the fourth of the quartet of birds in this row is rendered and coloured in much the same way as its companions in panels H2–H4. Its lower body and legs are lost.

6). Of this panel little is preserved other than a rounded feature in the upper right-hand corner, with concentric rows of *tesserae*, black, red, pink, pale pink, grey, grey and black. The subject is unclear. (Fig. 11.5 and Plate 11.19).

Row I: 1). A circle with four loops on the diagonals, its constituent band consisting of single rows of black, white, cloudy-white, grey and black *tesserae*. The panel has suffered extensive damage and only the lower right corner of the composition is preserved.

2). A pomegranate tree, the left half of which is preserved. Trunk and branches are in black, leaves in pale blue glass and the fruit is pale pink, modelled with a deeper pink and red. The top and the right side of the panel are destroyed.

3). Completely destroyed.

4). A well-preserved panel with a sheep in left profile, with three plants growing at its feet. The body of the animal is laid in cloudy-white and grey-white *tesserae*, articulated

with descending rows of white stones to describe the ribs. Pale blue is used on the feet and in the eye. The sheep is depicted with open mouth browsing on a fourth plant.

5). Another complete panel with two brightly coloured affronted birds which raise their beaks to peck at a large solitary fig above. The birds have yellow bodies, black wings with white lights, and red beaks and legs. The fig at the top of the panel is pale blue, articulated in black, and split open below with red and pink *tesserae* to show the flesh. To the left, a plant with pale blue leaves and a chalice-shaped flower with pink and red apex grows up from the corner of the panel.

6). A magnificent flowering plant, consisting of a stem from which issue two symmetrically disposed pale blue round fruits below and then above two large pale blue trumpet-like flowers with two large stamens issuing dramatically from each bell. These stamens are banded, strong pink, red, strong pink and pale pink. There is some damage in the middle and lower right part of the panel (Fig. 11.5 and Plate 11.20).

Row J: 1). Almost completely destroyed. A small area is preserved at the top of the panel but too little to reveal the subject.

2). Completely destroyed.

3). Completely destroyed.

4). A fruit tree with spreading branches and many pale blue leaves blown to the right. A large fruit hangs down on either side; one is pink shaded to orange-red, the other cloudy-white shaded to pale pink. The left-hand edge of the panel is destroyed.

5). A large pheasant-like bird, facing to the left, dominates this panel. The bird's body is pale blue with elaborate yellow articulation, the wing white contoured in black, and the beak, legs and feet are blue, like the body. Two flowering plants grow up behind and in front of the bird, with pale blue leaves and chalice-shaped flowers modulating from white through pink to red. The panel is well preserved.

6). Another well-preserved panel containing a square with corner loops, set slightly askew and off-axis. The ribbon forming the square consists of single rows of black, orange-red twice, pink, white and black *tesserae*. The central space is filled with a poised stepped square, yellow and white (Fig. 11.6 and Plate 11.21).

Row K: 1). The panel is largely destroyed, its right side cut by a subsequent grave (3242). A small area in the upper left-hand corner is preserved, with branches and a pale blue leaf and what appear to be the tail and wing tip of a bird facing to the right.

2). Completely destroyed by grave 3242.

3). Completely destroyed.

4). A largely destroyed panel. In the lower right-hand corner are the remains of a feature consisting of a chequerboard of black orthogonal lines enclosing little pink fields, possibly the body of an ornamental bird facing left.

5). An extensively damaged panel with the lower body, legs and fanned tail of a bird in left profile. To the left of

the bird is the stem of a plant. The central section of the panel and the top and left half are destroyed.

6). A 16-petalled daisy fills the panel. The central roundel is yellow, framed by rings of white and black. The petals, starting at the top axial position and progressing clockwise, are: pinkish-white contoured in red, yellow contoured in pale yellow, grey-blue contoured in pale pink, pale yellow contoured in yellow, pinkish-white contoured in red, white contoured in grey-blue, yellowish-white contoured in pink, grey-blue contoured in white, yellowish-white contoured in orange-red, yellow contoured in white, grey-blue contoured in pink, pale yellow contoured in yellow, pinkish-white contoured in orange-red, white contoured in grey-blue, pale pink contoured in orange-red, and grey-blue contoured in white. This results in axial symmetry in colour, with the four cardinal petals emphatic in orange-red framing pinkish-white, and the four sub-cardinals with pink or orange-red framing white or grey-blue (Fig. 11.6 and Plate 11.22).

Row L: 1). The left half of the panel is preserved. A rounded contour at the upper left and a horn-like feature at the upper right may indicate a horned quadruped in right profile. There is a further curving feature in the lower-left part of the field.

2). Completely destroyed by the subsequent grave 3242.

3). A largely destroyed panel. The rear leg and tip of the tail of a large quadruped in right profile are preserved on the left-hand side of the field. The leg, which is pale yellow shaded with a stronger yellow, terminates in a paw with claws, possibly indicating a bear.

4). A severely damaged panel with a large and elaborate vase, a krater with S-shaped handles, flanked by tumbling black vine-trails. The upper body of the vase is grey-blue with red in the mouth; below this is a tapering section with three yellow flutes contoured in white and black, then a white knob and finally a little yellow rectangular base. The upper left section of the panel is destroyed.

5). A pear tree with spreading branches and pale blue leaves. The two large pears hanging on either side have ochre-white centres surrounded by pale pink, with a white highlight on one side and a corresponding orange-red shadow on the other. The panel is well preserved, although a few *tesserae* are missing.

6). The field is filled by a large circular whorl, with a central white button and 12 radiating arcs, in succession orange-red, pale blue, deep brownish-red, yellow, pale pink, orange-red, yellowish-white, grey-blue, pale blue, brownish-red, yellow and yellowish-white. The arcs are contoured in black, and each is lit on its outer curve by a line of white stones. There is some damage on the left-hand side of the figure (Fig. 11.6 and Plate 11.23).

Row M: 1). A concave dodecagon, with 12 radiating segments. Each of these is lighted on one side with white. The colours are now hard to discern but appear to be arranged in bilateral symmetry: cloudy-white, orange-red, pale pink, deep brownish-red, pink and grey-blue. The

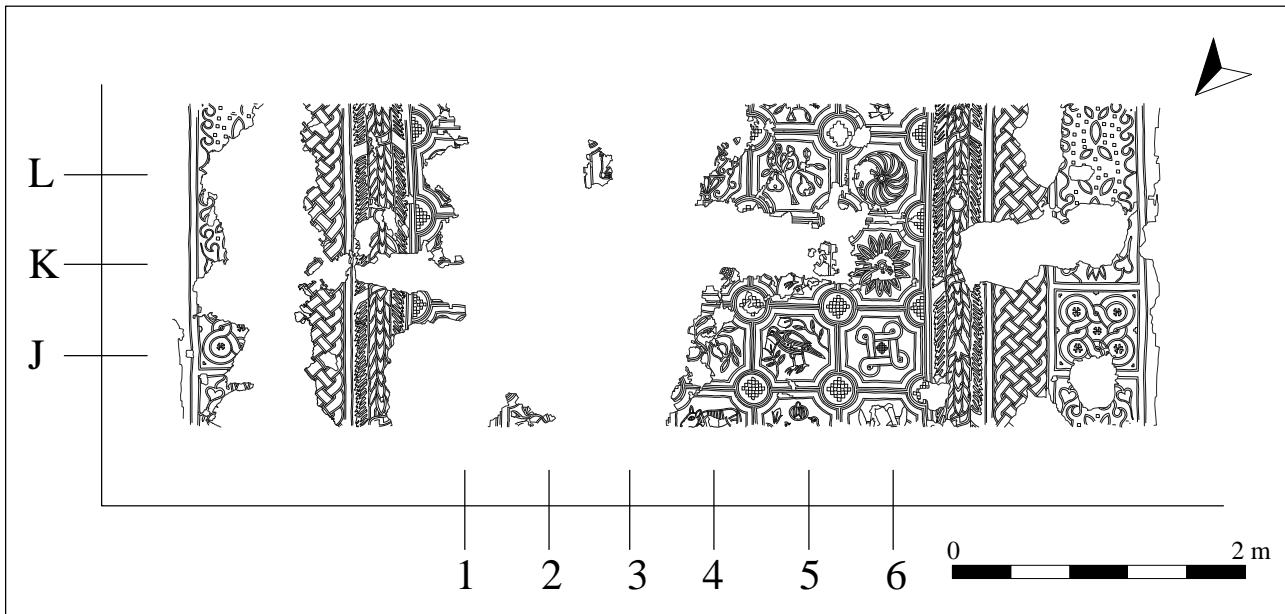


Figure 11.6. Detail of Rows J–L of the nave mosaic

panel has suffered severe damage, particularly at the top and lower right.

2). Almost completely destroyed by the subsequent grave 3242. In the upper right-hand corner there are vestiges of a rounded configuration containing red *tesserae* and contoured in black.

3). Almost completely destroyed. A small area of white ground by the left-hand edge of the field and a few other scattered *tesserae* are preserved.

4). An extensively damaged panel. A large quadruped in cloudy-white, its rear up and head down, is depicted leaping across the field from right to left, in front of a tree. Only the body and rear haunches of the creature are preserved. The tree has the usual pale blue leaves growing from its spreading branches.

5). A hunting dog with lolling red tongue, long pointed ears laid back and curling black tail bounds up across the panel in front of a leafy tree. The body of the hound is pink, with the ribs articulated in white. A red collar rings its neck. Branches with pale blue leaves spread out on either side of the trunk, beneath the dog. The panel has suffered damage, particular at the top and upper right, where there are extensive losses. These two panels (M4 and M5) clearly constitute a narrative sequence which may also have involved the preceding panel (M3), now destroyed but possibly originally containing a hunting-net, set to catch the quarry. The fugitive animal in panel M4 is now unidentifiable but may have been a wild ass.

6). A magnificent ornamental duck in left profile fills this panel. Head, neck and folded wing are yellow, the wing contoured and banded in black and white. The tips of the wings just cut and pass the contour of the back. The lower body is cloudy-white, shaded to grey-blue. Beak and webbed feet are pink. The duck wears a red and white jewelled collar about its neck. Above the bird a stem with

three exotic lanceolate flowers, modulating from red, through pink to pale pink, grows out from the right edge of the panel. There is some damage to the head of the duck and the central flower (Fig. 11.7 and Plate 11.24).

Row N: 1). A considerably damaged panel which contained a fruit tree. The remains of leaves are preserved at the lower left and right and the upper right, as is part of a large rounded fruit, orange-red and pink, hanging on the right side of the tree.

2). A severely damaged panel with a large wading bird in right profile, tail up and head down. The bird's body is grey-blue and its wing yellow with grey-blue articulation. Its long legs and feet are red. The head is lost. Behind and in front are plants with black stems and pale blue leaves. The upper right corner of the panel is destroyed.

3). A knot of Solomon interlooped with a rounded square. The ribbon forming the vertical bar of the cross-knot is pink, consisting of single rows of black, white, pink, pink and black; that forming the horizontal bar is yellow, with black, white, yellow, yellow and black *tesserae*, and that forming the square is red, with black, white, red, red and black. The panel has suffered some damage on its upper left edge.

4). A damaged panel with two partridges or quail, set on the diagonal and facing in opposed directions, one head-up, the other head-down. The bodies of the birds are in cloudy-white with pale pink lights, the wings are grey-blue underlit in white, and the bellies are delineated with repeating vertical rows of yellowish-white, black and cloudy-white. The breasts and fronts of the necks are white. Their bright eyes have black pupils set in orange-red, and their beaks, legs and feet are red. Flowering plants grow from the lower left and upper right corners of the panel; these have the usual pale blue lanceolate leaves and chalice-like flowers

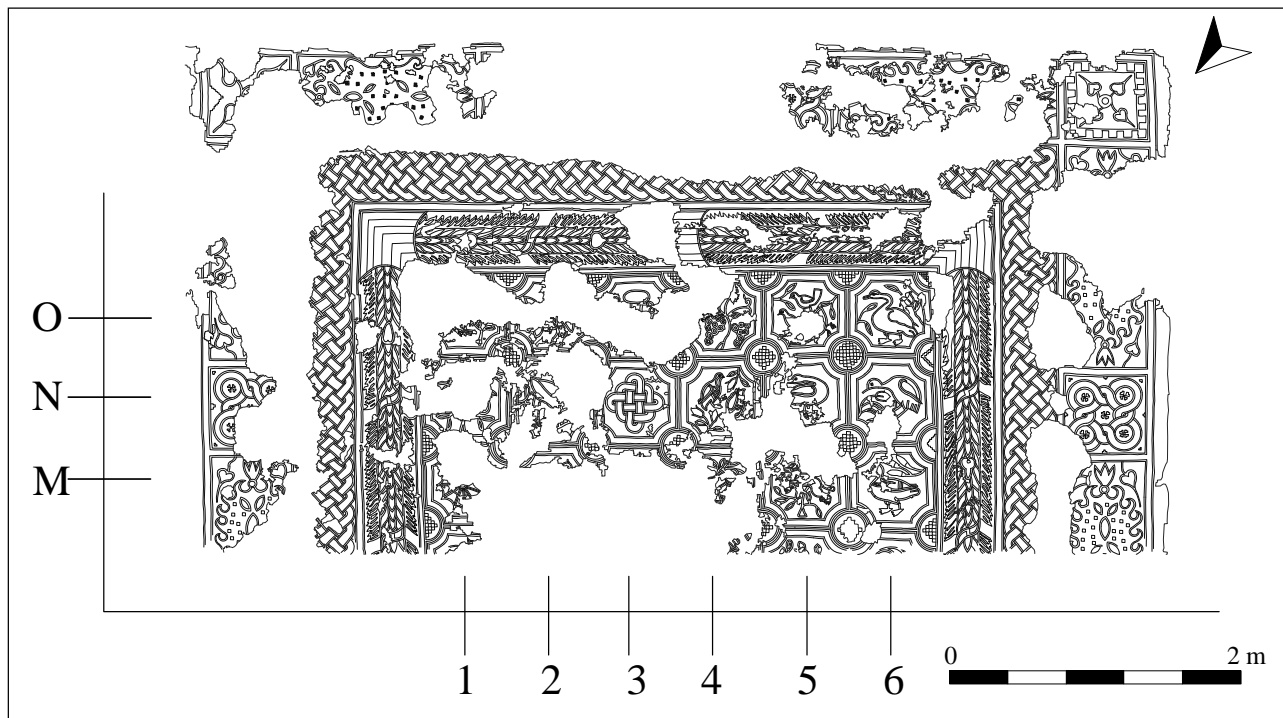


Figure 11.7. Detail of Rows M–O of the nave mosaic

with apexes that modulate from pale pink through pink to red. There is some damage in the lower right-hand corner and the head of the right-hand bird is lost.

5). The panel contains a large goose with its head turned and extended to look back over its tail. Its body is cloudy-white and its wing grey-blue, under-lit with white. The eye has a black pupil set-off by two red *tesserae*. The beak is red and the legs and feet red with pink webs. The lower left corner of the field is destroyed.

6). A heron-like bird with rounded back in left profile. Its body is grey-blue, with the wing defined in black and under-lit in white, and its short squared-off tail is defined with alternate rows of black and grey-blue stones. Five red *tesserae* delineate a crest on the head, and a black pupil set in white forms the eye. In the lower-left corner is a flowering plant with pale blue leaves and a compact flower modulated from pale pink through pink to red. There is a hole in the lower part of the field (Fig. 11.7 and Plate 11.25).

Row O: 1). An extensively damaged panel with the legs and webbed feet of a large wading bird in right profile and the base of a small tree or large flowering plant. The legs and feet of the bird are red with pink webs. The centre and top of the panel are destroyed.

2). Another extensively damaged panel, once filled with a large fruit tree. The base of the tree is preserved, as are the pointed lower parts of two large pale yellow fruits. The tip of a pale blue leaf survives in the upper left part of the field.

3). The centre and lower parts of this panel are destroyed. Preserved is the upper section of a large krater with reversed S-shaped handles, one of which survives. The neck of the vase is cloudy-white, shaded to pale greyish-white, with a

touch of red beneath the handle. The opening in the mouth of the vessel is filled with pale blue, contoured in white.

4). The panel is filled with a vigorously spreading vine, with a pale blue main stem and curling shoots bearing spiky vine-leaves in two tones of black. A large cluster of grapes hangs on either side of the vine. The berries are prominent, each consisting of a red nucleus ringed by black and then pink. The upper left side of the panel is destroyed and there is a small hole by the right-hand edge.

5). A damaged panel with three birds, all facing to the left, that on the lower right with his head and body inclined downwards. The uppermost bird is black with a large raised squared-off tail. Its wing is defined by lines of red and white and its feet are red; the beak is missing. The head and forepart of a second bird are preserved in the lower left part of the panel. This also is black with red beak and feet. A third bird, at the bottom right, has lost its head and breast. This one has a pale blue body and, like its companions, red legs and feet. Simple plants with branching stems, each terminating in a pale blue leaf, issue from the two upper corners. There is a hole in the lower middle part of the panel.

6). A well-preserved panel depicting a large and magnificent swan with curling neck, facing inwards, in left profile. The body is cloudy-white and the wing yellowish-white. The large webbed feet are laid in lighter and darker shades of black. The eye consists of a black pupil surrounded by four black *tesserae*, with one further sliver of black stone in front and two behind to form the long narrow eye typical of this kind of bird. One plant with branching stems and two pale blue leaves comes in from the lower left side, while another grows up into the upper right corner; this

consists of a stem with one pale blue leaf and a terminal heart-shaped flower modulating from white through pink to red, and finally a single detached leaf above (Fig. 11.7 and Plate 11.26).

Nave: borders

This central field is elaborately framed. The extreme outer margin of the floor is a band of pink, made up of some eight rows of *tesserae*. This is followed in succession by a row of black stones, three rows of ochre and another single row of black. Immediately inside these outer bands is the first major border, in which two panels alternate: one of these is composed of a square field inscribed with a looped square and a poised curvilinear square interlooped with one another to form four large eyelets in the corners; the other is an elongated rectangle carrying an elaborately indented cartouche, a rectangular variant of the silver-plate motif.

In the square panels, the bands forming the interlocking looped squares and the curvilinear squares are constructed of a sequence of single lines of black, orange-red, pink, ochre-white and black *tesserae* for the one, and black, grey-blue, cloudy-white, ochre-white and black for the other, against a variegated ochre-white ground. The colours switch between the two types of square from panel to panel. The central concave octagon and the four corner circles contain saltires of tassels of black *tesserae*. The two square panels in the south-east and south-west corners of the nave are reserved for special treatment (see Fig. 11.7). Each contains a gently windswept rosette of four stems issuing from a central yellow button and terminating in pointed ivy leaves, parti-coloured red and pink or mauve and yellow, and grey-blue and cloudy-white. In the southeast corner-square, which has suffered extensive losses, there were black stepped triangles rising from the centre-point of each side between the leaves. The southwest corner-square, which is well preserved, is framed by a simple dentilled fillet on a white ground. The squares at the northeast and northwest corners, both poorly preserved, appear to have been uniform with the regular design used throughout this border.

The visual associations of the second motif are hard to characterize. It appears to be a variant of a design which was first given the name 'silver-plate motif' by Doro Levi.⁴ This normally appears as an elongated lozenge, sometimes set within a rectangle, containing a curvilinear lozenge-shaped figure with curling cusps rolling symmetrically along its outer edges, sometimes with jewel-like settings. In the version deployed in the Vrina basilica, the overall shape of the inner cartouche is not an emphatic lozenge but has filled out into a plump, elongated sub-oval with cusped contours, terminating at each end in a spiky trefoil on a narrow neck set with a little knop or jewel. On one hand this has the appearance of a vegetalised marine acanthus confection, on another possibly that of a displayed aegis-like animal skin, its surface embellished with what appear to be bright gem-settings, and with curtailed indentations terminating in

wave-like crests which roll along its contours. These panels tend to alternate in their colours, although the alternation is not strict or regular. In all, the ground is white towards the outside, varying to ochre on the inside. In one set, the cartouche is light blue or cloudy greyish-white with a little round knop/gem on the neck of the trefoil terminal at each end; the interior is set with a sequence of lentoids parti-coloured orange-red and yellow, mauve or pink; between these is a regular sprinkle of little white or black squares consisting of four *tesserae*; in the corners are single ivy-leaves, also parti-coloured, yellow or pale grey-blue and pink. On the other alternating set, the cartouche is pink, the lentoids parti-coloured deep grey-blue and light grey-blue or cloudy-white, the little sprinkled squares black, and the corner leaves dark grey-blue or pink and pale grey-blue or cloudy-white. The square panels measure 0.53×0.54 m; those with vegetalised cartouches have the same width, c. 0.54 m, but vary in length between c. 1.30 m and 1.70 m (see Plate 11.8).

Inside this outer frame, the second major border carries a shaded six-stranded guilloche.⁵ Each of the six strands is contoured with single lines of black *tesserae*, enclosing four rows of coloured stones followed by one of white, to give a lighted edge. The colours of the strands, in repeating succession, are pink, pale greenish-white, pale blue, deep brick-red, pale mauve and mid-blue. The ground, visible at the intersections and at the edges, is white. The overall width of the border is 375 mm and the single strands are each 60–70 mm across (see Plate 11.8).

The third, innermost border is a barbed garland of adjacent laurel leaves superimposed in threes, with spaced fruits and flowers and an obliquely entwined ribbon, against a white ground.⁶ The outer barbing consists of densely set foliate fringes made up of leaves of pink, red, yellow, orange and light blue in varying sequence. At the corners and at the centre of the west side, the garland issues from the concave apertures of rainbow-coloured sleeves. The bands of these polychrome sleeves, from outside to inside, are deep-red, brick-orange, pink, white, pale mauve, pale blue and mid-blue. The garland is divided into sections, alternately red and blue, by the twisting ribbon. In the red sections, the leaves, growing progressively lighter towards their tips, are made up of bands of deep-red, mid-pink, light pink and white; in the blue sections, of mid-blue, light blue, pale mauve and white. The ribbon is white with red flares (see Plate 11.8).

Nave: tablets with inscriptions

The eyes of a visitor entering the nave would have been drawn immediately to a large *tabula ansata* (1.38×0.485 m overall, including *ansae*), a horizontally extended rectangular tablet with splayed 'handles' on each lateral side bearing a dedicatory inscription, set in front of the western door some 2.32 m from the threshold (see Fig. 11.3 and Plate 11.13). The framing contour of this tablet consists of two rows of pink *tesserae* clasped by single

rows of black. Twin ivy leaves with joined stalks fill each of the two handles. These leaves are parti-coloured, to the north (left) red and pale blue, to the south (right) pink and yellow. The inscription, in Greek, is in four lines, in a black capital script (letters 75–125 mm in height), with uncial forms used for epsilon, theta, sigma and omega:

ΥΠΙΕΡΕΥ[χης]
 ωΝΟΙΑΔΕ[v]
 ΟΘΕΟCTA
 ΟΝΟΜΑΤΑ+

(ὕπερ εὐχῆς ὧν οἶδεν ὁ θεὸς τὰ ὀνόματα)

In fulfilment of the vow (prayer) of those whose names God knows.

A second inscribed tablet, uniform with the first but larger (originally *c.* 2.035 × 0.670 m overall including *ansae*), is set *c.* 2.35 m further to the south, at about the mid-point of the nave (see Fig. 11.5). The pavement is much damaged in this area and the greater part of the inscription and its support has been destroyed. However, it appears that the tablet was of exactly the same design as its companion to the north. The inscription was in six lines, similarly in black capitals, incorporating uncial forms, notably sigma in the surviving fragment. Letters are preserved from the first four lines, including two complete words and two partial words:

[.....]ΚΑΙΑΝΑΠΙΑΥ
 [.....]ΥΛΗCCOY
 [...A?M?H[]Α
 [.....]Ν
 [.....]
 [.....]

[ὕπερ μνήμης] καὶ ἀναπαύ[σεως τῆς δο]ύλης σου [...]

[For the memory] and rest/repose of Thy (maid) servant [...]

Elements of both the upper left corner of the tablet and its right-hand end are preserved. From these it is clear that a little under half of the first two lines of the inscription (their latter halves) survive. These consist of nine characters in the first line and seven more widely spaced letters in the second. The completion proposed above would require ten missing letters in each line, a number that would fit comfortably into the now-destroyed left-hand side of the panel.

The sanctuary

The pavement of the sanctuary is uniform with that of the nave but incorporates other features, which are appropriate to the heightened significance and symbolism of the space (see Plate 11.9). The programme of the floor is constructed around, and centred on, the altar. The base of this is still *in situ*, a rectangular slab of limestone 1.44 × 0.89 m, set 0.59 m out from the chord of the apse and offset slightly to the east (left) of centre. Six sub-square sockets are cut into its

surface to receive the upright posts which once supported an altar-table above, one at the centre point, one at each of the four corners, and a sixth cut into the middle of the rear edge (Plate 11.27).⁷

The focal point of the mosaic pavement is a large panel, directly in front of the altar, equivalent in area to four of the panels of the surrounding inhabited grid. This contains an arched aedicule flanked by two slender trees shaped like cypresses (Plate 11.28). The arch is yellow and is set with single large pale blue discs and smaller paired discs in alternation. It is supported by large white capitals, which rested on yellow columns, the latter now almost completely destroyed. The arch is surmounted by a cloudy-white three-pointed ornament, of exactly the same formation as the trefoil terminals of the silver-plate cartouches in the outer borders of the nave and sanctuary. Two birds face each other across the top of the arch, that on the left pale pink with a grey-blue wing contoured in white, a white collar and red beak and legs, and that on the right cloudy greyish-white with a black wing defined in white, a red eye and beak and legs also red. The two flanking trees are patterned with inverted chevron-bands to intimate symmetrically rising branches. These chevrons are in striking colours; on the left-hand tree, starting at the bottom, yellow, red, cloudy-white and pink; on the right-hand tree, yellow, pale blue, pink and yellow. Within the arch, against a pale pink ground, hangs a pale blue lamp burning with a red flame. Below this is the principal focus of attention – a flower, a large inverted-heart-shaped blossom with flaring calyx, white at its base then pink and red. The flower alone survives; the stem, together with the whole lower section of the arch, is destroyed.

This arched aedicule is flanked by two blocks of inhabited orthogonal grid with concave octagons, forming circles, uniform with the central field in the nave (Fig. 11.8). The panels immediately adjacent to the arched aedicule and abutting the altar contain flowers (see Plates 11.27, 11.29 and 11.30). That on the left (Q3) has two large pale blue crocus-like flowers. There is some damage to the top of this panel. The corresponding panel to the right of the aedicule (Q5) also contains a flowering plant, with white and pale blue leaves and dart-shaped flowers modulated from white though pink to red at the tips. The panel has suffered considerable damage at its top and bottom. Thematically associated with these two fields is a narrow half-panel abutting the altar on its right-hand side (R5). This has a plant with a large pale blue crocus-like flower, similar to those in Q3. There is a small area of damage at the bottom of this panel. Flanking the lower half of the aedicule, on its left-hand side, is a panel (P3) containing a circle with four loops, the same motif as that in panel J6 in the nave. The colours of the constituent band here are somewhat irregular for most of the figure, tangent rows of black, yellowish-white, pink, pink, pink, white and black, while in the bottom-right loop the scheme is black, yellowish-white, pink, orange-red, grey-blue and

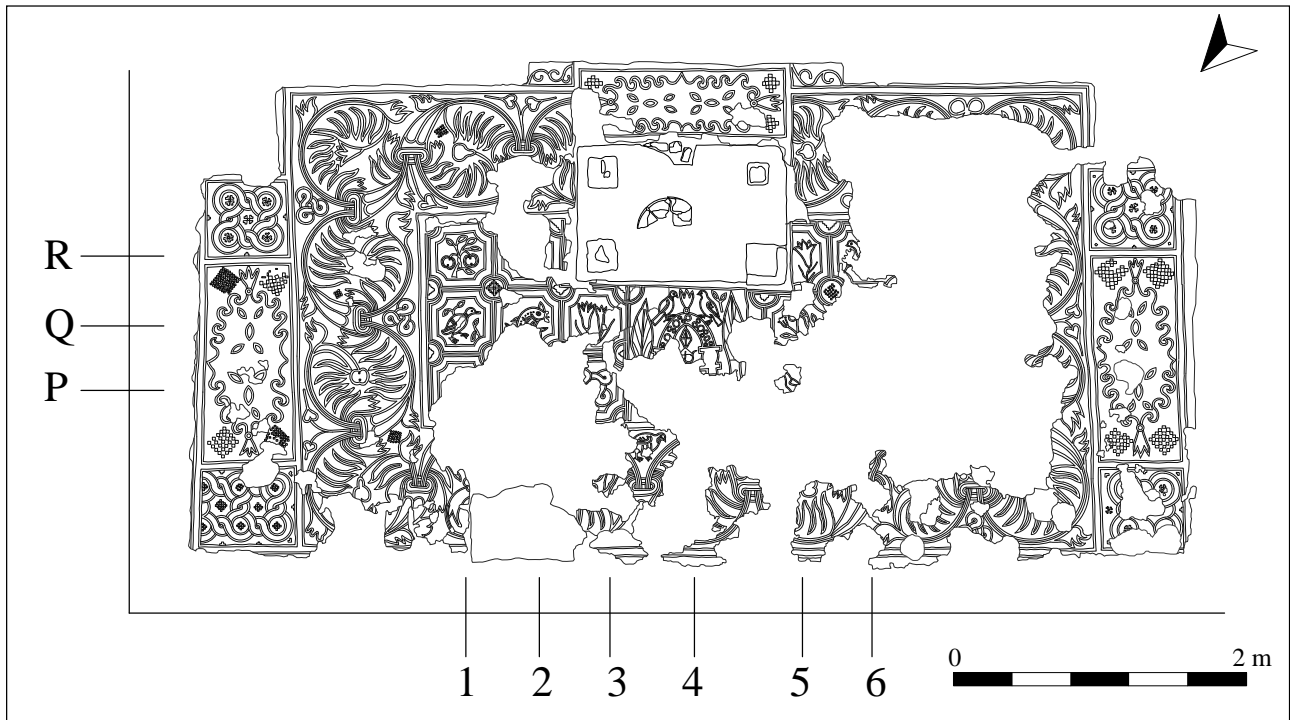


Figure 11.8. The sanctuary mosaic (Rows P–R)

white. The panel has suffered considerable damage on its left-hand side. The corresponding panel on the opposite side of the aedicule (P5) has a large pale blue bird in left profile. Much of this panel, including all the borders, is lost. The grid extends for a further six panels, two deep, on either side, partly embracing the altar. On the left-hand side, starting at the upper left and progressing down, row by row, the panels contain the following subjects:

R1). A tree with spreading branches, bearing pale blue and yellowish-white leaves, and two large round fruits resembling apples. The fruits have yellow interiors and red exteriors. The panel is generally well preserved, with a small hole near the centre.

R2). The panel is largely destroyed. In the upper right-hand side a small red feature is preserved, which could be the beak of a bird facing to the right, looking directly at the altar.

Q1). An ornamental duck in right profile with a pale grey-blue head, a body in white, pink and yellow, and a deep-red wing, contoured in pink. Its neck is ringed by a white collar and a further white band crosses its folded wing. Its beak, legs and feet are red, the last with pink webbing. It has a little curling tail and wing-tips which project just past the contour of its back. One leafy plant emerges from behind the bird's back, another from the lower right corner. The panel is well-preserved, although there is an area of damage in the middle of the bird's body.

Q2). A large fish with three prominent triangular fins, leaping up to the right. The body of the fish is grey-blue

with articulation in black and a little orange-red. The fins are orange-red and the same colour is used to define the contour of the jaw and gills. In the lower right there is a curling feature in deep-red, the nature of which is unclear. The panel has suffered extensive damage in its lower half.

P1). This panel is almost completely destroyed. Preserved is a strip at the top, with possibly the pink beak of a bird, a duck, facing left.

P2). Completely destroyed. (Fig. 11.8 and Plate 11.29.)

Of the corresponding panels on the right side of the altar, only the panel R6 survives to any extent. This panel is extensively damaged, with just the pale grey-blue head of a bird, in left profile, preserved. This possibly formed a pair with a corresponding bird in panel R2, on the other side of the altar. Between this panel and the border the pavement was damaged. An infant's grave (3249) relating to Phase 13 had subsequently been dug through this damaged area cutting the mortar foundation underlying the flooring (see Fig. 7.101). All the other panels of the gridded field on this side of the altar are completely destroyed (Fig. 11.8 and Plate 11.30).

This gridded field of panels around the front of the altar is framed by a magnificent scrolling *rinseau*, set against a pinkish-ochre ground, almost filling a wide border that varies in width between c. 0.80 m and 0.90 m. Each scroll of this sumptuous plant-trail issues from a fluted cornucopian trumpet node and terminates in a prominent brightly coloured fruit, with a profusion of long sinuous fronds and claw-like leaves growing out from the concave interior sides of the stems (Plate 11.31).

The cornucopian nodes are a cloudy grey-blue, with pink flutes contoured in pale ochre and black. The main stems which grow out from these horns are formed of a row of yellowish-white stones sandwiched between two rows of black on either side. The leaves which grow out in serried profusion from the inside edges of the scrolling stems are of two kinds: thin sinuous leaves which are either pink with orange-red spines or pale ochre with cloudy grey-blue spines, and three-pronged claw-like leaves with pink interiors and deep orange-red perimeters. These claw-like leaves grow adjacent to the horns, where they are sometimes accompanied by a poised stepped square of alternating black and white *tesserae*. In most scrolls there are 12 of the long sinuous leaves, six on each 'half-circle' curve, in groups of three, pink and pale ochre. At the corners the colour-groupings vary. The curling stem of each scroll terminates in a fruit or exotic blossom in the centre of the medallion: a pear in deep orange-red, pink and yellow, an apple in deep orange-red, pink and white, or a lily-like flower with a serrated bell in cloudy grey-white. The 'spandrels' outside the scrolls are filled with one of a number of motifs: claw-like leaves; a branching stem with two ivy leaves parti-coloured, sometimes grey-blue and cloudy grey-white, sometimes deep orange-red and pink; a knot of three loops with eyelets, formed of a band coloured either black, yellowish-white, orange-red, pink and black or black, white, cloudy grey-blue, cloudy grey-blue and black; or two round fruit, each either parti-coloured grey-blue and cloudy grey-white and highlighted in white, or pink and another colour. In front of the axial panel with the aedicule the one preserved spandrel contains a small bird, in right profile facing inwards (see Plate 11.31). The bird's body is a cloudy grey-blue striped with white towards the front and pink towards the rear, the wing greyish-white and the beak and legs orange-red. Its bright eye consists of a black pupil set in red. A corresponding bird in left profile, facing this one, must originally have stood in the adjacent spandrel to the right. The *rinceau* border is best preserved on the east side of the sanctuary. It has suffered considerable damage on the north side, in front of the altar, and even more severe damage on the west side.

Finally, abutting each of the three walls of the sanctuary there is a silver-plate cartouche, similar to the ones in the outer border in the nave but simpler in detail (Plate 11.32). That on the main axis immediately behind the altar is laid with a mixture of grey-blue and cloudy grey-white stones, set with red jewels. However, the little interspersed squares present in the nave are absent here. In the corners of each cartouche panel are poised stepped squares consisting of alternating groups of four black and four ochre-white *tesserae*. Flanking the back of the axial cartouche, against the step of the apse, are two little panels with exiguous scrolling *rinceau* in black on white. The cartouches of the two lateral panels are pink, with lentoid jewels which are deep orange-red to the northeast and parti-coloured grey-blue and cloudy grey-white to the southwest. The stepped poised squares in the four corners of these panels are red

and black to the northeast and white and black to the southwest, with the *tesserae* set in varying patterns. Both these panels are slightly damaged. On these lateral walls the cartouches, as in the nave, are flanked by square panels containing interlooped curvilinear squares. The constituent bands consist of adjacent rows of *tesserae*, black, deep orange-red, pink, yellowish-white and black, or black, yellowish-white, cloudy grey-white, grey-blue, black, with some variation in the colours. The central octagon and the eyelets are each charged with a crosslet, either red or black. A black stepped triangle of four *tesserae* is set at the mid-point of each side. The design in the north corner is extended to accommodate the shape of the panel. All four of these panels have suffered some damage, more severe in the case of those on the southwest side.

The scheme of the floor is disturbed around the altar and the exact sequence of events which led to this disturbance is not at all clear. The altar-base is not positioned on axis but is offset towards the northeast (to the left). Consequently the focal niche with the single flower beneath a hanging lamp, which does lie more or less on the longitudinal centre-line of the church, together with the flanked paneled grid, is not centred on the altar. The mosaic scheme seems to have been designed to accommodate and frame the altar on three sides, while on the fourth, left-hand, side it breaks, with a ragged edge against the altar, in both the grid and the framing trumpet *rinceau*. To the rear, however, the long axial panel carrying a silver-plate cartouche is generally aligned and conterminous with the altar, and this mosaic panel forms one continuous lay with the trumpet *rinceau* and beyond that the grid to either side. The mosaic bedding and *tesserae* respect the altar slab behind, in front and to the right, and seem to have been laid up against the stone after it had been set in place – the normal procedure. There must have been some kind of miscalculation, change of plan or adjustment in the course of the positioning of the altar-base and the laying of mosaic but the precise nature and course of this procedure is not easy to ascertain.

The floors of both the nave and the sanctuary have suffered considerable damage, partly as a result of wear in the two centuries or so during which the building continued to function as a church, partly from the insertion of graves after the building had been abandoned and had come to be used as an occasional place of burial. In its early years the pavement was occasionally repaired. One such repair is visible in the nave, in panel C1, where the corner of the panel with the tails of a large fish and two attendant eels, together with the adjacent borders, was badly damaged in antiquity and restored with new *tesserae* which crudely recreate the frame but which replace the figured corner of the field with plain greyish-blue stones (Plate 11.33). A series of other such repairs are to be seen in the sanctuary, mostly just inside the stylobate of the screen which divides the sanctuary from the nave and near the southwest wall. These are of two kinds and appear to be associated with post-holes knocked through the pavement on two separate occasions to accommodate upright beams to support a

weak section in the roof above. In the first intervention, assigned to Phase 8 of the overall chronology, posts were set up by the stylobate to the northeast of the central axis and also over the silver-plate cartouche by the southwestern lateral wall. After the roof had been made good, these were removed and the holes in the mosaic repaired with *tesserae* smaller than those of the original pavement, generally recreating the original design, although usually simplifying and sometimes altering the forms. In the case of the southwestern cartouche, the central apex on the inner contour has been reworked as a rolling wavelet. In a second intervention, in Phase 11, a number of posts were driven through the mosaic just inside the stylobate. When these holes in the pavement were repaired large blue-grey *tesserae* were used and no attempt was made to recreate the original configurations in the mosaic (see Plate 11.33). On this occasion, the original chancel screen was replaced by a more massive barrier, consisting of thick limestone slabs which probably carried up to the roof to serve as a perforated diaphragm and support for the beams above. Substantial fragments of this replacement screen were recovered during excavation.⁸

Also in the sanctuary, the panel with the focal niche directly in front of the altar suffered damage. A diagonal area running from behind the head and back of the bird on the left-hand curve of the arched niche down across the frame and extending to the right-hand contour of the crocus-flower in the adjoining compartment has been replaced with small *tesserae* in somewhat unruly sequence, omitting the salvific leafy twig behind the bird, replacing and slightly displacing the upper point of the tree, and restoring the frame in somewhat altered colours, red and yellow stones seemingly being unavailable. It is likely that this repair was contemporary with the first phase of repairs by the screen and the restorative repairs in the nave.

Context and date

In its overall structure and in the elements of its design, the mosaic in the basilica on the Vrina Plain is related to a number of pavements in the region that have been identified as belonging to an extended Epirote coastal school. Other mosaics in this group are to be found in the little triconch church at Antigoneia, in the Baptistery, the Great Basilica, the Acropolis Basilica and the Triconch Palace at Butrint, in the basilica of Bishop Jovianus at Palaeopolis at old Corfu, in Basilicas Alpha and Beta on the island of Kephelos in the Gulf of Arta, in the basilica at Mesaplik, near Vlora, in Basilicas Alpha, Beta, Delta, Epsilon and the secular building at Nicopolis, and in the pavements at the 1 Maj Road site, at the Post Office site and in the Synagogue Basilica in Saranda.⁹ The orthogonal design of octagons forming circles in the central field in the Vrina Plain basilica is used in a number of these pavements and can be taken as one of the characteristic features of the Epirote group; it is to be found in the trapezoidal hall of the Baptistery at Butrint,¹⁰ in Basilica Alpha on Kephelos,¹¹ in one of the

panels in the nave of Basilica Delta at Nicopolis,¹² and in a late-Roman building on the site of the Post Office in Saranda.¹³ Versions with variant framing are also met with in central Albania, in the old province of Epirus Nova, at Byllis, in Basilica Alpha and Basilica Delta, where the birds, beasts and other motifs are somewhat differently rendered.¹⁴ Outside Epirus, this design is found in the central Balkans in a somewhat simplified late 5th-/early 6th-century version in the baptistery at Heraklea Lyncestis, in modern Macedonia,¹⁵ and in the southern Balkans in the Illissos Basilica at Athens,¹⁶ of the mid-5th century, where it is incorporated into a larger pattern to create a rather different effect.

Furthermore, the use of grids, albeit usually regular rectangular ones, in which the panels are filled with a variety of living creatures, plants and abstract compositions, is also a characteristic of this group; it appears in various forms in four pavements in Epirus Vetus. Three of these are in Nicopolis, two in Basilica Alpha, in the south chapel¹⁷ and in the atrium,¹⁸ and one in a chapel flanking Basilica Beta,¹⁹ all dating from the 6th century. There is a fourth example in the nave of the church at Mesaplik.²⁰

Among the other motifs deployed on the pavement of the Vrina Plain basilica, the interlooped squares in the outermost border are used in the aisles at Mesaplik,²¹ and the multiple-stranded guilloche in the second border is found in a reduced form also at Mesaplik²² and in the room to the north of the narthex of the synagogue basilica at Saranda.²³ The motif of the curvilinear square interlooping with a regular rectangular square, in panel B2 in the nave of the Vrina basilica, is also to be seen in the Illissos Basilica at Athens, in the floor which provides the only Greek parallel for the overall design of the central field at Vrina.²⁴

As regards the motifs in the various cells, some of the closest comparisons among the published mosaics of the southern Balkans are those in the rectangular grid in the narthex of the basilica at Theotokou, on the Magnesians Peninsular, from the very late 5th or early 6th century.²⁵ There the compositions of a bird among plants, a hen with her chicks, fruit trees and a spiral whirl find close correspondents among the panels in the Vrina basilica.²⁶ Furthermore, the cell with the two birds pecking at a fig at Vrina bears comparison in general terms with a cell with two birds facing each other either side of a central flower in the north transept of the triconch basilica at Klapsi, near Karpenision, to the east of Nicopolis in northwestern Greece, on a pavement which has been dated to the first half of the 6th century.²⁷ The flower at the centre of this panel at Klapsi is of the same type as the focal flower beneath the arched aedicule in the sanctuary in the basilica at Vrina. Panels with two squid accompanying a central fish, similar in concept to the flounder flanked by eels in panel C1 in the Vrina basilica, feature in the border of the pavement of the narthex of the Great Basilica at Heraklea Lyncestis, of the late 5th/early 6th century.²⁸ Other types of fish and birds at Vrina are also present in this pavement at Heraklea Lyncestis, the fish with prominent red crest,

fins and gills (panel Q2), the goose with head turned and stretched round over its back (panel N5) and in their general configuration, a number of swans (panel O6).

In the nave of the Vrina basilica panels M4 and M5 (and possibly M3 also) stand out from the rest, in that the motifs they contain participate in a narrative which unites the two adjacent fields, rather than being self-contained and isolated: a hunting dog in M5 chases a fleeing quarry in M4, possibly towards a net in the now-destroyed panel M3. The practice of uniting adjacent panels or medallions in this way is another of the peculiar features of the Epirote group of mosaics,²⁹ to be seen in the Baptistery at Butrint (dog, wild ass, net)³⁰ and in the north transept of Basilica Alpha at Nicopolis (hunters and their quarry).³¹ This is not a particularly common feature of floor mosaics in the late-Roman world, although the juxtaposition of hunters and their prey and humans and animals in various mutually engaging activities in adjacent scrolls of vine trail is a salient feature of the repertoire of mosaicists of the period working in what is now Jordan.³²

The luxuriant scrolling *rinceau* in the sanctuary is without close parallel in the region, although somewhat tighter, less-exuberant and idiosyncratic acanthus *rinceaux* with cornucopian trumpet nodes do figure as frames in the basilica at Akrini (second half of the 5th century),³³ in the nave of the basilica at Longos (early 6th century),³⁴ in the right aisle of Basilica Gamma at Nea Anchialos (mid-/later 6th century),³⁵ and in the baptistery at Heraklea Lyncestis.³⁶

However, the pavement also includes motifs for which it is hard to find parallels in other mosaics in Epirus or in the southern Balkans in Late Antiquity; these include the elaborate garland which makes up the inner border and the striking bejewelled cartouches which dominate the outer border in the nave and are deployed as critical axial accents in the sanctuary. These latter bear a close relationship to the so-called 'silver-plate' motif found on 5th- and 6th-century pavements, including ones at Emaus,³⁷ at Antioch³⁸ and at Qasr el-Lebia in Cyrenaica, where it features as a border-motif in the northeast annex of the East Church.³⁹ They also find striking analogues in a number of somewhat distorted variants of the motif much closer to hand, one such example being a 5th-century pavement in an excavated Roman villa in the Rruga Naim Frasheri, in Tirana, the so-called Mosaic of the Church of the Spring of St. George, and another, also attributed to the 5th century, is in the House of Polycharmos at Stobi.⁴⁰ Traditionally, the silver-plate motif takes the form of an elongated rhombus, with curling cusped contours set within a lozenge panel, while the cartouches on the floor of the basilica on the Vrina Plain are closer to irregular ovals within rectangular panels. However, the two examples on the pavement in Tirana, while being set within lozenge panels, are generally oval in shape, the ends of the cartouche being gathered and knotted as they are on the Vrina Plain. It would appear then that the configurations in the panels in the basilica are idiosyncratic local variants on the silver-plate motif.

The paucity of securely dated mosaic pavements from

this part of the Mediterranean means that it is not possible to determine the exact time of execution of the Vrina mosaic from its design and style. The only pavements in the area which have been assigned dates on reasonably secure grounds are ones in Basilicas Beta and Alpha at Nicopolis, associated by Ernst Kitzinger over sixty years ago, from their inscriptions, with Bishop Alkison who died in AD 516, and Bishop Doumetios, who held office in the second quarter of the 6th century.⁴¹ The floor in the basilica on the Vrina Plain does not share such elements in common with these mosaics at Nicopolis as would make a similar date compelling. However, there is archaeological evidence to provide a *terminus post quem* for the pavement. Three copper *nummi* were found in the fill of a post-hole perforating the pavement in the sanctuary, just inside the stylobate of the transverse screen. One of these was an illegible coin of a late 4th/early 5th-century form; a second was a *nummus* of the western emperor Libius Severus (AD 461–65), and a third a *nummus* of the eastern emperor Leo I (AD 457–74).⁴² The fill containing the coins appeared to consist largely of the disturbed lower foundation layer of the mosaic pavement and it is likely that the *nummi* were originally deposited during the preparatory stages of the laying of the floor. How old they were at the time of their deposition it is hard to say, but while the surfaces and material of the early *nummus* have been worn away to illegibility, the two later coins retain much of their substance and some of their imagery, suggesting that they had seen limited circulation and use at the time of their burial.

The overall grid scheme of the main panel in the nave cannot be used as an exact index for dating. The only floor in southern Greece with a similar design, in the Illissus Basilica, near Athens, has been assigned to the mid-5th century on stylistic grounds, although there is no archaeological evidence to support this dating.⁴³ The pavement on the island of Kephelos in Epirus, which offers a closer parallel visually, has been dated to the early 6th century from similarities with pavements in Basilicas Beta and Delta at Nicopolis.⁴⁴

Another index for dating the pavement may be provided by the compositions in the cells of the grids in the nave and the sanctuary. Many of the animals and birds stand in fields of leafy flowering plants or against a tree. In the southern Balkans, this convention tends to be a feature of pavements dated to the 5th century. In mosaics from Epirus Vetus commonly assigned to the 6th century the attendant plants and trees are often omitted and the animals are portrayed in exemplary, almost heraldic isolation. This distinction is readily apparent if the gridded schemes of the 5th-century pavements in Basilica Gamma⁴⁵ and Basilica Delta⁴⁶ at Nea Anchialos – ancient Thebes (narthex annexes) – and the late 5th-/early 6th-century floors of the outer narthex of the basilica at Theotokou, on the Magnesian Peninsular, and the south aisle of Basilica Gamma at Amphipolis⁴⁷ are compared with the 6th-century mosaics in the narthex and atrium of Basilica Alpha at Nicopolis,⁴⁸ and in the baptistery at Butrint.⁴⁹

All in all, a date in the last quarter of the 5th century or the first years of the 6th century seems likely for the deposit of the three coins and for the laying and design of the pavement.⁵⁰ There do not seem to be any really close parallels elsewhere for the mosaic, in the details of its design and execution, so that in the present state of our knowledge it is not possible to identify the place of origin of the craftsmen who designed and laid it.

Analysis

The scheme of the central field in the pavement of the nave of the basilica, a grid filled with a menagerie of animals, sea-creatures, quadrupeds and birds, trees, fruit and flowers and also schematic devices, was particularly favoured for churches in the Balkans in the 5th and 6th centuries. In general terms, the creatures of the earth represented in such contexts can be interpreted as the animals created by God on the fifth and sixth days and then typologically with the faithful of the new creation, reborn in grace after the incarnation, the birth of Christ.⁵¹ This is an association made by St. Ambrose in his commentary on the *Hexaemeron*.⁵² Thus on one level, the floor can probably be read as a representation of the Terrestrial Paradise, the garden created by God and described in the Book of Genesis (2.9). It is true that birds, quadrupeds and plants are widely referred to by early Christian writers in a straightforward natural and literal sense as living creatures, with no particular Christian meaning or symbolism.⁵³ However, Henry Maguire has shown how early Christian writers not only interpret these in a literal sense, as representatives of God's creation in all its variety and magnificence, but also in a symbolic sense, as embodiments of a redeemed world created anew.⁵⁴ Birds can be associated with the martyrs and saints and with the souls of the faithful in paradise;⁵⁵ land animals are sometimes identified with unregenerate sinners who have strayed from the path to redemption;⁵⁶ fish are widely used as symbols of redemption from sin and of renewal and salvation through Baptism;⁵⁷ the fruit trees which fill so many of the panels in both the nave and the sanctuary may allude in particular to the Earthly Paradise, described both in Genesis and by early Christian commentators as being stocked with a variety of fruit trees about the fountain at its centre, a place where trees perpetually bear fruit and plants are endlessly in flower.⁵⁸ Similarly, plants and fruits can be associated with the fruits of human nature and the bread of heaven, which are renewed and made manifest through the congregation of the Church in Christ, and through Baptism, in which the coming together of the waters at the first Creation is re-enacted and renewed.⁵⁹ Furthermore, particular animals and plants could be associated with particular symbolic values and meanings: the fish with the believer rescued from the sea of sin, the deer with the faithful who seek salvation through baptism, the cock with rebirth and resurrection, the hen protecting her assembled chicks with the church which gathers all her members under her protective wings,

and the hunting dog pursuing its fleeing quarry with either the faithful believer chased by Christ into the net of the Church, or with Christ himself pursued by the devil into the soteriological snare of his death and subsequent resurrection.⁶⁰ The quatrefoil and the interlooped squares are likely to carry a related charge of meaning; both can be read as exemplifying the divine quaternity that underlay the structure of God's cosmos in the thinking of the time;⁶¹ while the motif with interwoven squares can be taken as a variant on the cruciform knot which appears as a potent symbolic device in critical locations on countless mosaic pavements in Late Antiquity.⁶²

This salvific array in the nave is articulated by a number of indexical sacramental and sacro-symbolic figures. At the entrance, immediately in from the main door, set on axis, are a fish facing a bunch of grapes in adjoining compartments (Row A 3–4), greeting the visitor with a reference to the saving powers of the eucharist for those rescued, as fish, from the sea of sin through the Church. In the centre of the floor doves and sheep (Rows G 1, H 1–5, I 4), the souls of saved believers and the flock of the faithful, cluster round the principal dedicatory inscription. Further on, immediately in front of the threshold into the sanctuary, a vine with two large bunches of grapes and a large vase (Row O 3–4), again on axis, pick up and reiterate the eucharistic message from the start of the nave. These provide a clear but understated compass for passage up the church from the door to the altar.

A theme which recurs with some frequency in the floors of churches of the period is that of Earth and Ocean. This follows the contemporary understanding of the geographical complexion of the world, in which the inhabited land-masses, known and unknown, are surrounded by an outer ocean.⁶³ On the one hand, early Christian writers described these simply for what they are, as God's creation and as the wonder of his handiwork.⁶⁴ On the other hand, however, some authors saw in them the reconfigured framework of a general diachronic as well as a particular individual progress to renewal, redemption and eventual salvation.⁶⁵ Although authorities of the time, like Gregory of Nazianzus, saw the earth and the ocean and their creatures equally as elements of God's well-fashioned and magnificent creation, in their visual representation, particularly in the mosaic pavements of churches, there is a tendency to show progression from the inchoate dangerous sea, through the calm waters of the Nile delta, to an oikumene densely populated by humans and beasts, evidently indicating a promised land, an earthly paradise equated with the idealised activities of everyday life on the land. A complex expression of this is to be found in the floor of the west church at Qasr el-Lebia, in Cyrenaica, which like the floor of the Vrina basilica is composed of a chequerboard grid.⁶⁶ There is an element of this progression in the layout of the Vrina floor; a preponderance of fish and crustaceans in the first ranks of compartments, shifting after the sixth row to an emphasis on birds and terrestrial beasts, with a growing concentration of birds, creatures of the air,

at the south end of the nave. The increasing presence of plants and trees accompanying animals in compartments, progressing up the nave, underscores this sense of progress towards a leafy, flowering and fruiting paradise.

The tempo of the design and imagery is raised in the sanctuary. Here there is a continuation of the grid, with flowers, fruit trees and an assemblage of birds, fish, and probably originally terrestrial quadrupeds, the three orders of animal creation, addressing the focal aedicule. These are surrounded by a luxuriant fruit-bearing *rinceau* with a profusion of multi-coloured leafage, which would seem to define a garden hedged about by an abundant fruiting enclosure. The single bright red and white flower rising beneath a lamp in the arched aedicule, at the centre of this profusion, is a remarkable feature, unparalleled in any other surviving mosaic floor of the period. Its position, framed in an arched aedicule lit by a hanging lamp, with two birds, apparently doves, perched on the arch above, flanked by trees, indicates a *locus* of high sanctity and the presence of the Holy Spirit. Lamps hanging above an altar, an empty throne, fountain, lamb or other symbol of sacred presence,⁶⁷ birds on an arch or niche or in attendance on a focal symbol or person,⁶⁸ and trees flanking a sanctuary, fountain or cross are all characteristic indicators of a sacred, paradisiacal place.⁶⁹ It is possible that this single axial flower was designed to reference and to draw attention to the presence of the relics of a saint deposited in a *confessio* beneath the floor of the apse and to mark the martyrial status of the church.

Red flowers, painted and in mosaic, are to be found in profusion in Late Antiquity and into the early medieval period throughout the Mediterranean, on the floors of churches, as at Henchir Ounaïssia in Tunisia (6th–7th century),⁷⁰ in baptisteries, for instance on the font at Sbeitla in Tunisia,⁷¹ and above all in funereal contexts, on 3rd–4th-century mosaic grave markers from Henchir Thina in Tunisia, from the catacombs in Rome (Via Anapo) and Naples (San Gennaro), and in the spectacular late 3rd- and 4th-century vaulted painted tombs at Thessaloniki.⁷² These flowers are almost always red in colour but it is by no means clear what kind of flowers are being depicted. In some cases they have the shape of rosettes, in others palmette-like forms, while some, like those in the Vrina Plain basilica and in the early 6th-century baptistery at Butrint,⁷³ are tight inverted heart-shaped blossoms, white with red peaks, held in a delicate black chalice of petals. In Christian Late Antiquity, flowers belong to the visual apparatus of paradise and demonstrative sanctity. Prudentius, writing in the last years of the 4th century, in his hymn on the martyrdom of St. Vincent, describes how the saint saw the jagged cutting fragments of pottery on which he was made to lie in the course of his execution, ‘clothe themselves with tender flowers, while the prison exhales the scent of nectar’.⁷⁴ When the *notarius*, the stenographer, of Bishop Evodius of Uzalis, a town to the north of Carthage, died suddenly around AD 420, a pious widow dreamt that she saw branches of rose-buds spring

up from his tomb as his body was being raised to heaven by two men in white.⁷⁵ As Patricia Miller has observed, in the context of the cult of martyrs and their relics, flowers were commonly associated with blood, drawing on an old Roman tradition of associating blood-red flowers, especially roses, with death and rebirth.⁷⁶ The Rosalia in which the rebirth of the earth in Springtime was celebrated, and the Dies Rosationis, spring rites in which the graves of dead relatives were decked with roses and other blood-red flowers, were popular Roman festivals which continued into Late Antiquity. There was also a range of stories in Roman mythology in which the shed blood of the protagonists metamorphosed into red flowers. Likewise, Christian martyrs were associated with gardens and garlands of roses, and the Holy Innocents were referred to as flowers of martyrdom.⁷⁷ Miller has suggested that there may have been a particular association drawn between female virgin-martyrs and flowers, citing both literary references and a painting in the oratory of Abou-Girgeh, near Alexandria, in which an orant virgin stands in a field of tall flowers, some with cruciform blossoms.⁷⁸ Prudentius, in his hymn on the martyrdom of St Eulalia, speaks of the marble floor of her tomb as being

like a rose-covered meadow blushing with various blooms. Pluck ye purple violets, pick blood-red crocuses. Our genial winter has no lack of them; the cold is tempered and loosens its grip on the land to load our baskets with flowers.⁷⁹

In the light of this strong association between flowers, particularly red flowers, very often roses, and saints undergoing martyrdom, it is possible, even likely, that the single red flower in the aedicule, lit by a hanging lamp, attended by birds and flanked by trees, may be the mark of a martyr’s cult, perhaps of the presence of a major relic deposit in the vicinity of the apse and even an indicator of the dedication of the church. The choice of a flower as the focal emblem within the aedicule could indicate the cult of a female virgin martyr.⁸⁰ No clear archaeological evidence for a relic deposit in the sanctuary was found during excavation; however, the large robber cut in the centre of the apse may have removed such evidence and could have been made by intruders searching for valuables beneath an indicative feature (see Fig. 6.9).⁸¹

Another raft of reference throughout the floor is present in various devices carrying some kind of apotropaic, protective, guarding powers, scattered over various compartments in the nave. These include intertwined and interlooped squares, the polychrome whorl in row L and the doubled cruciform knot of Solomon in row N. The three borders which frame the large central panel can be read as bearing an even more emphatic sense of protective empowerment and enclosure: the inner richly beribboned and barbed laurel garland filled with fruit and flowers, the densely woven guilloche which surrounds it, and especially the outer sequence of panels – strongly jewelled silver-plate cartouches with aggressively cusped contours alternating

with complex interlooping curvilinear squares.⁸² These are all powerful hedges, entanglements, shields and traps to encompass and secure the central area of the nave. Some of the same apparatus is deployed in the sanctuary, with emphatic spiky silver-plate cartouches positioned directly behind and to either side of the altar. Here the central grid of motifs is ringed by an oversize *rinseau* of great circling fruit-bearing trumpet scrolls, which acts as a massive hedge, like a great screen, to define a paradisiacal precinct and call attention to the altar and the immediate inner sanctum.

However, overlying these layers of signification and reference in the floor there may be a more generic social meaning in this overtly Christian programme. The variety of sea-creatures and the large and powerful feral quadrupeds must inevitably have touched, in the eyes and minds of the congregations, on the one hand the common Roman love of marine life in all its abundance and variety as an expression and a symbol of affluence and status, and on the other the Roman preoccupation with the ferocious beasts of the amphitheatre and the games as representing mastery and control over the wildest forces of nature in the context of extraordinary public and private munificence. The trees laden with fruit similarly suggest a carefully managed and abundant nature that benefited its caring stewards and owners. Beyond the pair of grapes and a fish at the entrance, with their introductory sacramental reference, the sea-creatures arrayed at the start of the nave, immediately in front of the door leading from the narthex into the nave, are not types to call up immediate symbolic reference in the mind of the observer; rather they are the kinds commonly enjoyed at table – fish, a crab, a lobster, and shrimps – together with mushrooms. Could the idea have been to lay out an enticing visual trap, a selection of the delicacies an honoured guest might have expected to have been offered in one of the élite residences of the city; an irresistible starter which would tempt visitors in, lower their defences and lead them to progress from a mundane and literal seeing of familiar delights to an ulterior, symbolic, spiritual understanding? And could they at the same time have been recognised as *xenia*, as engagingly real symbolic offerings of hospitality on the part of the benefactors who had underwritten the construction of the church and the laying of the mosaic? In this way the patrons could embrace the whole congregation as their *clientes et amici*, clients and friends, so ensuring their own standing as enduring masters of their benefaction.⁸³ On such a reading, the manifold animals and plants deployed on the floor would function at the same time both as signs of prosperity and opulence in the secular world and as symbols expressing central Christian sacraments and articles of faith. It is tempting to see them as having been designed to engage visually with an affluent and aspirant lay congregation, drawing members into the basilica and suggesting that the values and pleasures which they enjoyed and paraded in their water-side villas coincided, outwardly at least, with the doctrines and beliefs of the Church.

Inscriptions

The first of the two inscribed panels, *tabulae ansatae*, overlying rows B and C of the nave grid, is an anonymous ex-voto dedicatory inscription of a type that appears in a number of variant forms in Christian buildings in the Balkan provinces in the late Roman period.⁸⁴ The benefactors conceal their names and identities, both as a public demonstration of their humility in accordance with Christ's own injunctions not to flaunt one's person (John 7, 18), and presumably in acknowledgement of God's omniscience, which obviates any need of spelling out the names. The unnamed benefactors may have been the occupants of the similarly anonymous large axial tomb (3262) situated in the narthex of the church, opposite the inscription, just outside the doorway (see Fig. 6.28).

The second inscribed panel, over rows G and H at the mid-point of the nave, was clearly the principal dedicatory inscription on the floor – considerably longer, more complex and doubtless more revealing than the brief anonymous ex-voto by the entrance.⁸⁵ Like the first inscription, it follows a common formula, in this case attested not infrequently on silver plate of the period from the eastern Mediterranean,⁸⁶ invoking the memory and repose of the donor. It also has its analogues in early liturgies of the eastern churches.⁸⁷ The subject of the inscription is a female, the donor of the pavement and probably a principal patron of the basilica. This individual person was in all likelihood a member of the laity, a lady of considerable substance, presumably a representative of one of the most prominent families in the area in the decades around AD 500.

Although the inscriptions are original features of the floor, they are neither fully incorporated into the design of the pavement nor positioned centrally on the main north–south axis. They are displaced to the right (west) of the centric line of the nave, and visually overlay panels in adjacent rows of the grid, in one case the third, fourth and fifth panels in rows B and C, and in the other the third, fourth, fifth and sixth panels in rows G and H, such that they appear as independent inscribed tablets which have been cast provisionally, even casually, on the floor. This arrangement stands out in its startling informality and catches the attention of the visitor far more effectively than would inscriptional panels worked seamlessly into the overall framework of the floor design. This is a visual device related to the old Hellenistic convention of the *asarotos oikos*, the mosaic unswept floor dramatically strewn with the apparently casually discarded debris of feasting and entertainment.⁸⁸ The off-axis, acentric positioning of a dedicatory inscription was a strategy, designed to catch the attention of the observer, not uncommonly followed by mosaicists in the laying of tessellated pavements in the late Roman period; instances include the pavements of the naves of churches at Heraklea Lyncestis, in Macedonia, and at Shunah al-Janubiyah, in Jordan.⁸⁹

Mosaic and flooring as an index of hierarchy

One other aspect of the pavement calls for some comment: the restriction of mosaic to the nave and sanctuary of the church.

It is noticeable that only the nave and sanctuary of the excavated areas of the church are paved with mosaic.⁹⁰ This pavement terminates at the inner sides of the flanking piers; the spaces between the piers are laid with sheets of limestone. The narthex has a floor of large reused limestone slabs, with carefully laid rectangular slabs in the central section (which corresponds to the nave), and smaller, irregularly set fragments of stone in the two wings (corresponding to the aisles). The aisles have yet to be fully excavated but indications suggest they may have been surfaced with limestone.

Differentiation in floor surfaces is a common feature of both churches and secular buildings in Late Antiquity and is well testified in the region. So, for instance, at Nicopolis, in Basilica Alpha, there are mosaic pavements in the peristyle of the atrium, in the narthex, in the nave, and in the two transept wings, while the court of the atrium, the *bema* and the apse are laid with squared slabs of marble, and the aisles are covered with irregularly shaped pieces of marble;⁹¹ in Basilica Beta, the episcopal church of the city, there is mosaic in the atrium peristyle and the narthex, carefully fitted slabs of marble in the court of the atrium and the two transept wings, polychrome marble *opus sectile* in the nave, *bema* and apse, and irregularly set stone slabs in the aisles and the north and south wings of the narthex.⁹² In Basilica Delta only the atrium, the narthex and a small chapel on the south side of the church are laid with mosaic, while polychrome *opus sectile* is used in the nave and the *bema*, and irregular pieces of coloured marble in the north annex of the narthex and the southern transept wing. It is clear from these examples that paving material was one of the means employed in this period for establishing internal relational hierarchy in a building, for distinguishing the relative symbolic and social importance of the various spaces. Given that the apse and the sanctuary in symbolic terms are the most important locations in a church, it is clear that mosaic did not occupy the first place in the hierarchy of materials used for paving in the late Roman period. In descending order the ranking of materials would appear to have been: first polychrome *opus sectile*, second regularly cut slabs of marble, third mosaic, fourth rectangular slabs of limestone, and fifth irregularly shaped pieces of marble or local stone.

Various types of evidence can be adduced to demonstrate the relative values accorded to polychrome marble paving and revetment and to mosaic in the Roman and late Roman periods.⁹³ First is the value and status associated with polychrome marble. Under the Late Republic and the Empire, the display of variously coloured marbles was considered one of the principal ways of demonstrating power and status, serving as an index to a patron's control over, or access to, natural resources, to the quarries throughout the known world which supplied the different

types of rare stone, and as a mark of his power to transform the materials of nature into new creations of enduring symbolic and social value.⁹⁴

Some of the most spectacular public buildings in Rome were renowned in antiquity for this: the Basilica Aemilia in the Forum Romanum, the Temple of Mars Ultor and the Forum of Augustus,⁹⁵ and the Forum of Trajan.⁹⁶ The brilliant polychrome revetments of these structures served as an everyday reminder to citizens of the opulent generosity and the surpassing power and authority of the individuals associated with their construction.

A second index of the value accorded to mosaic in relation to other materials used in architectural finishing and decoration is to be found in their differential use in grand private residences under the Late Empire – palatial mansions designed as showplaces of wealth and social status. At the great country villa at Piazza Armerina in eastern Sicily almost all the rooms, both public and private, are paved with mosaics of extraordinary variety and elaboration.⁹⁷ The only space with a floor in another medium is the one which probably had the greatest social and symbolic importance of all: a great apsidal hall on the principal axis leading off the centre of the main peristyle, opposite the main entrance. This is likely to have been the *aula* in which the *dominus*, the owner, held audience and received his clients and visitors in formal state. The pavement here is laid with an imposing selection of polychrome marble slabs.⁹⁸ Exactly the same arrangement is to be found in the early 6th-century phase of the Palace of Theodoric in Ravenna, where the main audience chamber is paved with coloured marble while the floors of the peristyle and the triconch *triclinum* are laid with mosaic.⁹⁹

A third index is provided by the Price Edict of Diocletian of AD 301, which stipulated the maximum prices and wages for principal commodities and professions.¹⁰⁰ The Edict fixes the daily wage of the *tessellarius* at 50 *denarii* a day, of the *musearius* at 60 *denarii* (the distinction between these two categories of mosaicists is now lost).¹⁰¹ The former level of salary is shared with trades such as stonemasons and blacksmiths, the latter with marine shipwrights. Wall-painters were to receive more, at 75 *denarii*, and specialists, like figural painters, the *pictor imaginarius*, were rated at 150 *denarii* a day. The mosaic worker seems to have been classed around the mid-point of the ranks of craftsmen in Roman society – a maintained farm-labourer received 25 *denarii*.¹⁰²

From these different types of evidence, it is clear that mosaic held a high, but not the highest, place in the hierarchy of materials used for paving in antiquity. The grandest and most prestigious floors were undoubtedly those composed of large slabs of rare polychrome marbles and of coloured stone in *opus sectile*. Mosaic, made up of small cubes and chips rather than of large, carefully shaped pieces of stone, was ranked lower, but still above other types of floor surface employed in the various spaces of churches in Late Antiquity, such as slabs of plain limestone or loosely laid irregular pieces of stone. The materials used

for floor-surfaces can be taken as a reliable indicator of the relative value and status associated with the various parts of a building, in both the secular and the religious sphere, in the period.

In the case of the basilica on the Vrina Plain, the differential use of materials for the floors of the various spaces may indicate that the nave and sanctuary with their mosaic pavement were reserved for the enactment of the liturgy and were principally used by the clergy, while the plain stone-paved aisles were for the congregation, as would appear to have been the case in the basilicas at Nicopolis and elsewhere, where low barriers in the intercolumniations of the nave arcades screened-off the nave from the aisles. In the Vrina basilica it seems the aisles were further separated by the stylobate of the former Roman house that was visible at the southern ends of the aisles (see Figs 6.12–6.14). Projecting slightly above the floor-surface, this earlier wall may have been used as a foundation for screens which partitioned-off the greater length of the aisles from those sections to the east reserved for elite members of the congregation, close to the sanctuary. The door at the southern end of the western aisle could have been a means of special access to this socially restricted space. On a more modest scale, this would have replicated the arrangement in Basilica Alpha at Nicopolis, where the arms of the transepts, with their complex mosaic pavements, appear to have been designed for privileged congregational participants in, observers in, the liturgy performed in the raised and screened sanctuary. In the narthex of the Vrina basilica, a corresponding distinction to that between nave and aisles is made between the regular rectangular slabs of limestone paving laid in the central section in front of the central nave door, and the small, irregularly set fragments of stone that make up the flanking areas outside the doors which lead into the two side-aisles.

Epilogue

In two aspects the flooring of the basilica appears to be exceptional. First, a single overarching design encompasses both the sanctuary and the nave – a uniform grid of octagons, filled with a plethora of birds, terrestrial creatures, fish, flowers, trees, vessels and abstract devices. Of course, in the sanctuary the focal axial panel, a flower within an arch flanked by two trees, breaks the sequence, and a great scrolling *rinceau* encloses the altar. Nevertheless the ground scheme is the same in both spaces and the elements of the outermost frame in the nave – silver-plate cartouches and interlooped quatrefoils – also constitute the outer frame in the sanctuary. Elsewhere throughout the Mediterranean world, the practice was to treat the various spaces of a church – sanctuary, nave, aisles, intercolumniations – as distinct spaces with their own particular flooring schemes, contrasting or complementary but never uniform. The second unusual feature is the giant *rinceau*, with its sinuous fronds and claw-like leaves, fencing the altar in the sanctuary like an impenetrable hedge. The presence of a

dramatic screening plant scroll of this kind in the sanctuary, similarly, is quite exceptional. The intention behind these two features is not easy to fathom. The uniformity of the design in both spaces makes for an exceptionally harmonious, unifying effect. On the one hand this can be seen as breaking down any liturgical or hierarchical divide between the nave and the sanctuary; on the other hand, the introduction of the focal arched niche with flower under a lamp in front of the altar and the dramatic encompassing *rinceau* can be seen as lending heightened emphasis to the space around the altar by their presence in an otherwise uninterrupted continuum. This may be a visual strategy designed to forefront, in an unusual and thus particularly forceful way, the presence of a major locus of sanctity, a relic deposit beneath or behind the altar.

Notes

- 1 My thanks for help of various kinds in the preparation of this report to Jane Chick, Katherine Dunbabin, Oliver Gilkes, Diana Gratton, Simon Greenslade, Richard Hodges, Bea Leal, Sarah Leppard, Richard Maguire, Jacques Neguer, Elda Omari, Pagona Papadopoulou and Alessandro Sebastiani.
- 2 My thanks to Pagona Papadopoulou for help with the reading of this inscription.
- 3 Prudhomme 1985, pl. 168a.
- 4 Levi 1947, 468.
- 5 Prudhomme 1985, pl. 73 f.
- 6 Prudhomme 1985, pls 89–90.
- 7 These are all of different dimensions, the corner sockets measuring 0.20×0.21 m, 0.20×0.19 m, 0.19×0.19 m and 0.14×0.13 m, the median socket 0.13×0.12 m and the notch for the rear post 0.14×0.12 m.
- 8 A fragment of a limestone panel from a screen, with an imbricated design of overlapping tiles/scales in low relief, was recovered from a 9th–10th-century context in the west aisle of the basilica (Volume II, Chapter 6, Stone cat. 27). This may be a fragment from the original late 5th-/early 6th-century sanctuary screen.
- 9 Dode 2004 has identified, described and discussed these mosaics.
- 10 Meksi 1983, tab. I, VII; Dode 2004, fig. 9; Mitchell 2004a, fig. 11.5.
- 11 Spiro 1978, fig. 454; Dode 2004, fig. 58.
- 12 Spiro 1978, fig. 576; Dode 2004, fig. 108.
- 13 Dode 2004, fig. 120.
- 14 Basilica A: Muçaj 1987, fig. 5, pls II–III; Ceka and Muçaj 2005, fig. 52; Basilica D: Ceka and Muçaj 2005, fig. 62a.
- 15 Pers. comm., Jane Chick.
- 16 Spiro 1978, fig. 30.
- 17 Kitzynger 1951, figs 31–2; Spiro 1978, figs 466–8; Dode 2004, figs 82–3.
- 18 Kitzynger 1951, fig. 34; Spiro 1978, figs 533, 535–42, 544; Dode 2004, figs 94–5.
- 19 Kitzynger 1951, fig. 33; Spiro 1978, fig. 566; Dode 2004, fig. 104.
- 20 Komata 1984, fig. 2; Dode 2004, figs 61–3. Gridded schemes of this kind are found occasionally elsewhere in the southern Balkans: in the southern annex of Basilica Delta at Nea Anchialos, second half of 5th century (Spiro 1978, 355–6, 358–9, figs 400–01); in the southern annex in Basilica

- Gamma at Nea Anchialos, late 5th century (Spiro 1978, 325–7, pls 368–74); in the L-shaped corridor leading to the narthex in Basilica Gamma at Amphipolis, late 5th–early 6th century (Spiro 1978, 615–18, figs 676–82); in the narthex of the basilica at Hermione, early 6th century (Spiro 1978, 162–4, figs 157, 170–6); in the outer narthex of the basilica at Theotokou, early 6th century (Spiro 1978, 371–2, fig. 413); and in the nave of the basilica at Voskochori, early 6th century (Spiro 1978, 545–6, figs 614–16).
- 21 Komata 1984, figs 2, 7; Dode 2004, figs 61, 66a, 66b, 75.
 - 22 Komata 1984, fig. 2 and pl. on p.198; Dode 2004, figs 61, 66a, 68–71.
 - 23 Lako 1991, pl. XVII, 1; Foerster, Lako, Nallbani and Netzer 2004, fig. 3; Dode 2004, fig. 15.
 - 24 Spiro 1978, figs 30, 34.
 - 25 Spiro 1978, 371–2, fig. 413.
 - 26 These compositions cannot be compared in detail since the mosaic at Theotokou is known only from drawings.
 - 27 Spiro 1978, 300–01, fig. 346.
 - 28 Pers. comm., Jane Chick. Maguire 1987, 36–40, fig. 42.
 - 29 Dode 2004, 172–3.
 - 30 Mitchell 2004a, fig. 11.12; Mitchell 2008, 71.
 - 31 Kitzinger 1951, figs 21–2, 25–7; Spiro 1978, figs 498, 505–27.
 - 32 Piccirillo 1992, *passim*; Markoe 2003, 238–43.
 - 33 Spiro 1978, 551–4, fig. 620.
 - 34 Spiro 1978, 575–7, fig. 637.
 - 35 Spiro 1978, 345, 351, fig. 383.
 - 36 Pers. comm., Jane Chick.
 - 37 Talgam 2014, fig. 133.
 - 38 Levi 1947, 468; Cimok 2000, 282.
 - 39 Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins 1980, pl. 62.
 - 40 Pers. comm., Jane Chick.
 - 41 Kitzinger 1951, 86–93.
 - 42 See Volume II, Chapter 2.
 - 43 Spiro 1978, 28.
 - 44 Spiro 1978, 419.
 - 45 Spiro 1978, 334–6, figs 368–74.
 - 46 Spiro 1978, 352–9, figs 400–01, 409; 364–5, fig. 409.
 - 47 Spiro 1978, 626–7, figs 697–704.
 - 48 Spiro 1978, 432–5, figs 460–4; 461–4, pls 535–42.
 - 49 Mitchell 2004a, figs 11.1, 6–18.
 - 50 The birds and plants in the panels of the rectangular grid on the mosaic pavement of the narthex annex VII of Basilica Gamma at Nea Anchialos (Thebes) in Thessaly, which Spiro assigns to the mid-5th century, are generally related in type and design to the figures in the grids in the Vrina basilica (Spiro 1978, 334–6, figs 368–74). The pavement of the southern narthex annex, room IV, in Basilica Delta at Nea Anchialos, assigned to the second half of the 5th century, is related in similar ways (Spiro 1978, 352–9, figs 400–01, 409), as is the northern annex, room II, which has been tentatively assigned to the 6th century (Spiro 1978, 364–5, fig. 409). At a further remove is the pavement in the south aisle of Basilica Gamma at Amphipolis, late 5th–early 6th century (Spiro 1978, 626–7, figs 697–704).
 - 51 Genesis 1: 20–2.
 - 52 Elbern 1961; Elbern 1962, 457.
 - 53 Maguire 1987, 5–7.
 - 54 Maguire 1987, *passim*.
 - 55 Maguire 1987, 43, 57.
 - 56 Maguire 1987, 43, 57–8.
 - 57 Maguire 1987, 40; Dauterman Maguire, Maguire, Duncan-Flowers 1989, 22–3.
 - 58 Maguire 1987, 25, 37.
 - 59 Maguire 1987, 43.
 - 60 Mitchell 2004a, 213, fig. 11.12.
 - 61 Esmeijer 1978; O'Reilly 1998.
 - 62 Kitzinger 1993, 4, fig. 1.2; Dauterman Maguire, Maguire, Duncan-Flowers 1989, 3–4; Sansoni 1998.
 - 63 Maguire 1987, 21.
 - 64 Maguire 1987, 17–20.
 - 65 Maguire 1987, 41–4.
 - 66 Maguire 1987, 44–8; Chick 2014a; Chick 2014b.
 - 67 See e.g. Weitzmann 1979, cat. 520, 581–2, 6th-century ivory pyxis, Metropolitan Museum, New York; Donati 1996, 163, ciborium with hanging lamp, floor mosaic fragment, eastern Mediterranean, 6th century.
 - 68 See e.g. Weitzmann 1979, cat. 554, 618–19, 6th-century silver book covers, Metropolitan Museum, New York.
 - 69 Kitzinger 2002, figs 1–2, silver book covers from the Sion Treasure, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington D.C.
 - 70 Fantar 1994, 229.
 - 71 Fantar 1994, 231.
 - 72 Kourkourtidou-Nicolaidou 1997, 130, with references to further literature.
 - 73 Mitchell 2008, 70 and *passim*.
 - 74 Prudentius, *Peristephanon* 5, ll. 277–80; Prudentius 1953, 184–5.
 - 75 Evodius, Letter 158.3; Goldbacher 1904, 490, cited by Brown 2015, 222, note 11.
 - 76 Miller 2000, 228.
 - 77 Miller 2000, 230.
 - 78 Miller 2000, 230, fig. 1.
 - 79 Prudentius, *Peristephanon* 3, ll. 198–205; Prudentius 1953, 154–5. It might be noted that two of the compartments close to the focal niche of the sanctuary in the Vrina basilica contain blue plants which have a certain resemblance to crocuses (Row Q 3 and R 5).
 - 80 In this regard it might be noted that the patron recorded in the principal inscription in the centre of the nave was a female. However, there does not appear to be any evidence that female patrons and benefactors showed any particular preference for female over male martyr cults in the period.
 - 81 See Chapter 6.
 - 82 The silver-plate motif appears to have been associated with apotropaic agency. It was deployed in conjunction with other designs and devices with protective powers on late antique mosaic pavements in present-day Israel, among other places. Clear instances of this use of the motif can be found in the so-called Chapel of Epanagia in the church at Horvat Beit Loya of c. AD 500 (Tsafirir 1993, 270, pl. XVIIIIf) and on a threshold panel in the Villa of the Birds at Caesarea, a building of the late 6th century, where the silver-plate motif is framed by axes (Reich 1986). I am most grateful to Jane Chick for drawing my attention to these and other mosaics with the motif in Israel.
 - 83 On *xenia*, see Bryson 1990, 17–59.
 - 84 Caraher 2003, 224, 228–37, has discussed the incidence and significance of this and related formulae, particularly in churches in the southern Balkans, in some detail. See also LeClerq 1926, cols 688–9. An inscription in a mosaic pavement in annex-chapel 1 of Basilica C at Byllis, in central Albania, has very similar wording (Sodini 2005, fig. 5; Ceka

- and Muçaj 2005, fig. 35). For comparable inscriptions on mosaics in Greece, see Caraher's cat. nos 13 (Laureotic Olympus), 39 (Molaoi I), 44 (Kallion).
- 85 My thanks to Pagona Papadopoulou for help with the reading of this inscription.
- 86 Sevcenko 1992, 41, 53–4.
- 87 Caraher 2003, 233–4, with further literature.
- 88 For the *asarotos oikos*, see Dunbabin 1999, 26–7.
- 89 Heraklea Lyncestis: Gjorgievska 2008, 65; Shunah: Piccirillo 1992, 320–3. For the phenomenon of asymmetrical location as a means of emphasising and drawing attention to a sacred focus, see Mitchell 2001.
- 90 The little raised apse is paved with limestone slabs, possibly covering a relic deposit (see Chapter 6).
- 91 Spiro 1978, 429.
- 92 Spiro 1978, 469.
- 93 Dode 2004.
- 94 Pensabene 1998; Pensabene 2002, 9–15.
- 95 Pensabene 2002, 9–11.
- 96 Packer 2001, 180, 187; Pensabene 2002, 11.
- 97 Carandini, Ricci and De Vos 1982; Wilson 1983.
- 98 Carandini, Ricci and De Vos 1982, 231–4, pls XXXII, XXXIII; Wilson 1983, 25.
- 99 Baldini Lippolis 2001, 253–8.
- 100 For the edict, see Burford 1972, 143–4, and Dunbabin 1999, 275–6.
- 101 *Edict. Diocl.* 7.6–7; Giaccherio 1974, 151.
- 102 Lewis and Reinhold 1966, 468.

12 The Roman suburb on the Vrina Plain and its issues

Simon Greenslade and Richard Hodges

We may agree that ancient history often used to be too urban in outlook, but what is needed now is not paradox or exaggeration but a balanced approach which recognises the crucial elements that towns represented. There is no end to describing and defining the relationship between town and country, and once again the story varies from period to period, but the central point is too obvious to bear much repetition. Even if for some obscure reason the complex term 'Romanisation' were to be rejected by informed historians, the fact would remain that the spread of Roman power really did mean a measure of urbanisation, and of a specific kind, with environmental as well as other consequences.

Harris¹

The archaeology of the early Imperial settlement on the Vrina Plain is intriguing, begging many new questions. Following a field survey reaching back to the villages of Mursia and Xarra, a large-scale geophysical survey and an equally extensive assessment excavation, four large excavations (aggregated in three areas) were undertaken on the Vrina Plain. These excavations focused upon:

- (1) the northern terminus of a road crossing the plain and certain of the areas either side of it, in one case extending as far east as the early Imperial aqueduct running parallel to the road;
- (2) the large occupied area to the west of the road occupying a low hill beside a palaeochannel leading into the Vivari Channel;
- (3) discrete areas to the east of the aqueduct where a solitary residence and several mausolea have been found.

Given the scale of these excavations, it will be some years before their full importance is grasped in relation to the archaeology of the early Roman period within the walled town of Butrint. Nevertheless, some critical elements pertinent to the evolving topographic history are already apparent. Perhaps the most striking outcome is how little light these large-scale investigations throw upon the

Roman colony at Butrint, established by Julius Caesar and re-established after the Battle of Actium during the early years of Augustus's long reign.² On the other hand, the archaeology does chart the steady growth of the suburban settlement during the 1st and 2nd centuries AD, when, confined by its location on a promontory reaching into the south side of the Vivari Channel, this formed a substantial appendage to the town on the south side of the bridge.

The colony

There can be no doubt that a colony of some form was created at Butrint in the later 1st century BC.³ The textual evidence, especially the epigraphy, reveals an imperial intervention that owed much to the town's relationship to Agrippa, Augustus' victorious admiral at Actium:⁴ Agrippa's first wife was the daughter of Titus Pomponius Atticus, a major landowner close to Butrint in late Republican times, and an active proponent of the town. The question is, what impact did the colony have upon the pre-existing late Hellenistic town? Certainly, the civic centre of Butrint was extensively reorganised, a new paved forum being imposed over the earlier agora, causing a tract of the sanctuary town's Hellenistic fortifications to be dismantled.⁵ Associated with this grand new intervention were several major buildings as well as a number of major statues, indicative of the town's connections to the Imperial court in Rome.⁶ The aqueduct from Xarra and the road bridge across the Vivari Channel are other examples of significant investment in infrastructure that probably date to this moment. Both, it has been argued, were depicted on one type of Butrint's coinage minted from the inception of the colony through to the reign of the Emperor Nero.⁷ However, no such evidence exists in this early Imperial period for town-houses either in Butrint, between the Hellenistic wall and the Vivari Channel, or indeed on the Vrina Plain. Nor is there yet any evidence of landfill beside the Vivari Channel, such as was found in 11th-century deposits in Butrint, to facilitate the construction of channel-side buildings.⁸ Admittedly the opportunity

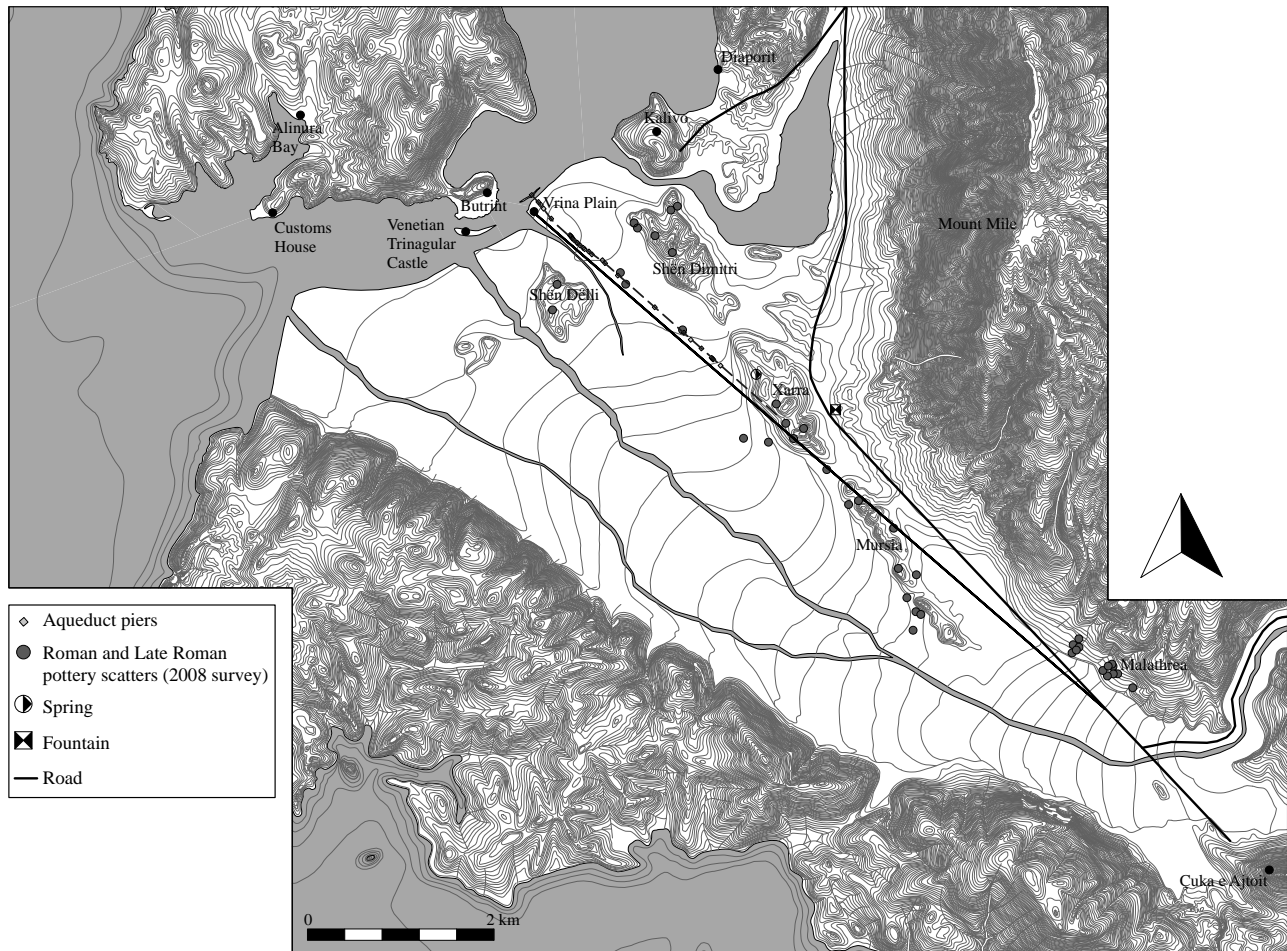


Figure 12.1. Map showing Butrint and its hinterland with the known Roman sites and the 2008 'Mursi Survey' marked (after Hodges et al. 2016)

to excavate down to Hellenistic levels beside the Vivari Channel in the large Triconch Palace excavations was greatly inhibited by waterlogging,⁹ but the absence of any diagnostic ceramics from these excavations is telling. Beyond the Vivari Channel, only beside the aqueduct pier excavated on the Vrina Plain by the Temple mausoleum (see Chapter 8) and in the area of the outlying residential house¹⁰ within the later cemetery zone were small amounts of late Republican wares present, possibly associated with small-scale domestic habitation on the plain.¹¹

It now appears that the early Imperial town was contained within the earlier, fortified Hellenistic area, and only as the enlarged community prospered during the Flavian era, as illustrated by the coins found in the Vrina Plain excavations in Phase 1, was the bridgehead settlement episodically, and then systematically, occupied. Other suburban settlements probably date from this period too (Fig. 12.1). For example, there are traces of Roman-period settlement beneath the Venetian Triangular Castle discovered during the geophysical survey.¹² Likewise, on Shën Dëlli, the hill behind the Vrina Plain settlement, traces of Roman settlement were found in the 2008 survey.¹³

It is also worth noting that on the east shore of Lake

Butrint, the Hellenistic and Augustan villa at Diaporit was extensively rebuilt on a new alignment in the period AD 40–80, with the new substantial waterfront villa angled to look across the lake towards Butrint, as opposed to looking out over the lake towards Ksamil and Phoenice.¹⁴ Elsewhere within the hinterland of Butrint, it will be interesting to learn the chronology of the diminutive maritime villa located next to the Customs House at the entrance to the Vivari Channel, and the settlement at the north end of Alinura Bay.

The suburb and centuriation

The road leading up to the bridgehead was a key element in the establishment of the Vrina Plain settlement. Bescoby in Chapter 2 argues that there are at least two road alignments: one that pre-dates the settlement and one (excavated; see Chapter 3) that certainly belongs to the 1st century AD. The latter ran across the drained plain by the most direct route through the new Vrina Plain settlement to the embarkation point leading to the Tower Gate in Butrint's Hellenistic wall circuit. The early road almost certainly had some antiquity and may date back to the Archaic Greek period or later prehistory. Bescoby speculates that the original pre-Roman

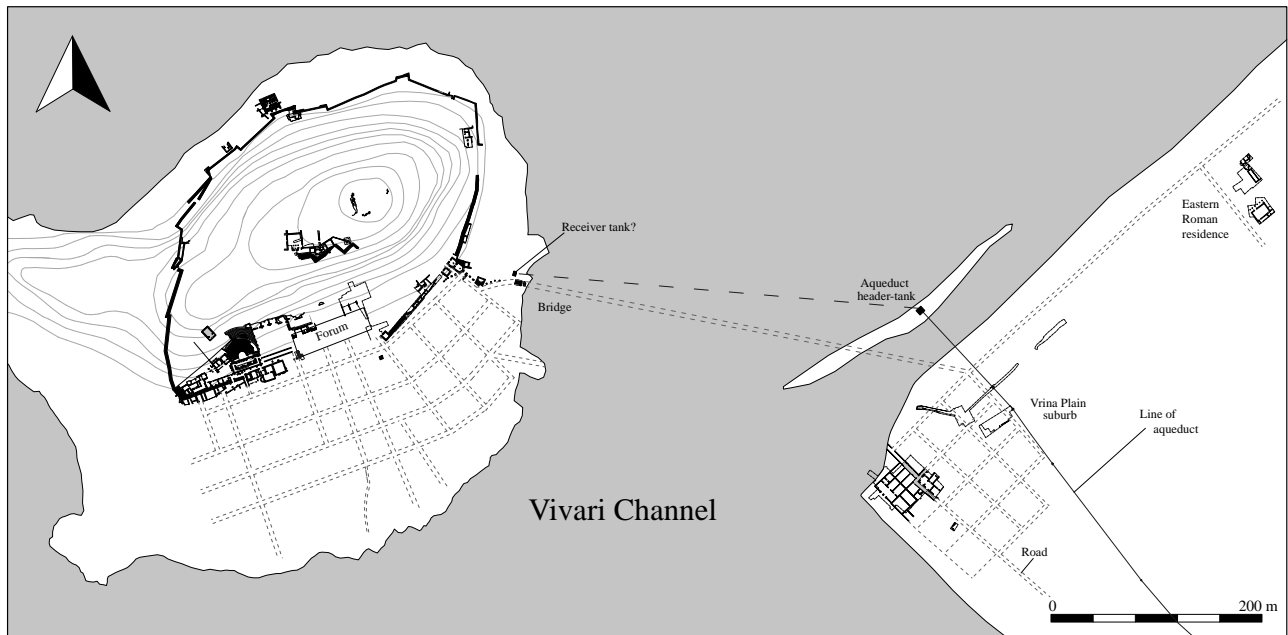


Figure 12.2. The topography of the Vrina Plain and Butrint from the mid-1st-century AD

road followed the low hills to Shën Dimitri, then pursued the south side of the channel to a point of embarkation close to the promontory reaching into the Vivari Channel, near a pebble bar in the channel. He believes that this early road followed a line from Çuka e Ajtoit, via Mursi, anchored on a peak of Mount Sotira (see Chapter 2).

The approximate direction of a major bridge across the Vivari Channel, almost certainly dating from this time, is known from a small surviving section on the north bank.¹⁵ Unfortunately, there is no trace of the road immediately south of the bridge, but it was almost certainly anchored on the pebble bar described above. Did the road running south from the bridge follow or create the alignment for the centuriation? It is simply not possible to determine this at present. Certainly, the piers of the aqueduct appear to follow an alignment within the grid of the proposed centuriation.¹⁶

The aqueduct almost certainly took the most direct route across the reclaimed land on the Vrina Plain, from a spring close to the modern village of Xarra to a header tank positioned on the edge of the Vivari Channel. It was supported on brick-built piers as far as a header tank that lay just to the north of the pebble bar described above. From the header tank, the aqueduct was possibly piped along the road-bridge into Butrint.¹⁷ The archaeology of the aqueduct indicates that it formed part of the early Imperial initiative in the civic centre of Butrint, bringing fresh water to augment that obtained from Butrint's wells. The excavations also seemed to show a branch from this supplied the Vrina Plain settlement from its inception; as yet, no wells of this period have been found on the promontory.

The Vrina Plain suburb coalesced around a road running eastwards from the bridgehead, just east of a palaeochannel running north-south from the Vivari Channel; this channel

may have provided safe harbourage off the main channel (Fig. 12.2). From the middle of the 1st century, extending through to the late 1st/early 2nd century, a series of houses of varying sizes was located within a grid of at least four *insulae* separated by newly made gravelled roads. Some of these houses incorporated shops fronting onto the roads. The angle of its grid of streets, running 6° off that of the cardinal line of the centuriation, suggests that other local elements determined its precise location. As part of this expansion, a new residential building with associated bathhouse was built on the channel edge, c. 400 m to the east of the suburb.¹⁸

There is little doubt that the changing relationship between the land and water table meant that more land was accessible from the later Hellenistic period until the later Roman period than had been the case previously. Much of this land would, of course, have been seasonally marshy, as can be seen today. This was the context for the Vrina Plain settlement. It may have owed much to the extensive clearance of the adjacent hill slopes in the later first millennium, leading to episodic colluviums being washed down towards the plain. Certainly, the one palynological record from close by at Lake Bufi shows a sudden drop in oak pollen in this era, suggesting extensive land clearance.¹⁹ Was there then a programme of land reclamation, perhaps with dykes and landfill, the latter being a prominent feature of the remaking of the 11th-century Byzantine town when the problems of the rising water-table needed to be met?²⁰ No dykes and no evidence of landfill have been discovered as yet, although a possible late Republican to early Imperial make-up level appears to underlie the outlying residential complex found far to the east of the principal road.²¹ Such land reclamation works are well known from the Roman Empire, but the evidence at Butrint does not exist.

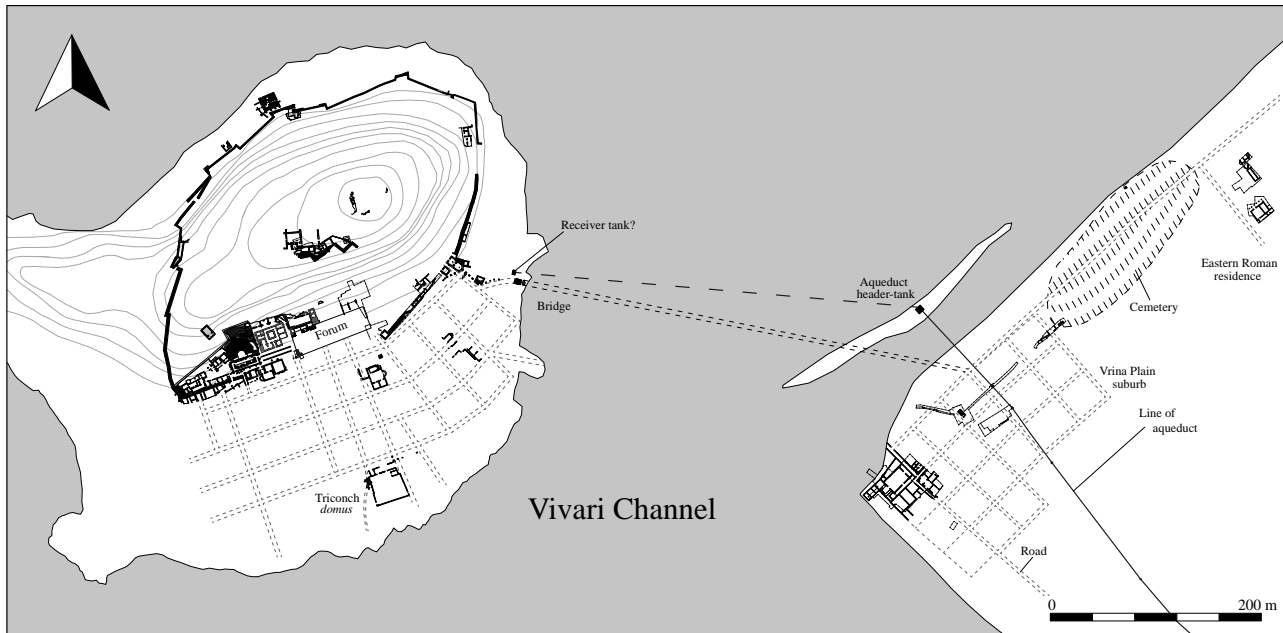


Figure 12.3. The topography of the Vrina Plain and Butrint in the 2nd century AD

According to Bescoby, the Hellenistic settlement of Çuka e Ajtoit and a peak on Mount Sotira, northwest of Butrint, served as the cardinal line for surveying and laying out the landscape of fields. The fields themselves were parcelled within a 20 by 20 *actus* grid²² – a comparatively common formula in Greece at this time.²³ Bescoby speculates, however, that ‘traces of another set of land divisions following the same alignment, but conforming to units divisible by 12 and 16 *actus* also was detected’ (Plate 12.1).²⁴ He proposes that this could relate to an earlier system of division (see Chapter 2). Unfortunately, no archaeological dating exists for either system. Ground-truthing and associated excavations of farmhouses within the centuriated landscape is now needed to ascertain definitively its form and chronology. Both systems, however, if they actually exist, appear to belong to the management of the Vrina Plain in the mid-1st to late 2nd century AD by a multitude of property owners, as opposed to the emergence in the 3rd century of a major property owner on this side of the channel.²⁵

With the intensification of agriculture, unsurprisingly the second phase of the suburb dating from the middle of the 2nd century involved infilling, either with the construction of new, well-appointed properties or by up-dating existing buildings (Fig. 12.3). By this time a branch of the aqueduct served a cistern in the community, indicating an investment at the bridgehead matching that previously available within Butrint. Contained by the extent of the promontory, with the palaeochannel on the west side, this was now a suburb in the strict sense. The field survey and subsequent geophysical survey suggest that at its zenith it occupied some 1–2 hectares.²⁶ Its cemetery presumably lay along the shoreline road, with further cemeteries on Shën Dimitri and at the foot of the Kalivo.²⁷ Connected to it were other outlying

properties on the exposed hilltop of Shën Dëlli, a kilometre to the east of the suburb, while the earlier eastern residential complex on the shore edge in this area also continued to be occupied and developed.²⁸ As was noted above, traces of another putative suburb were found in the geophysical survey around the Venetian Triangular Castle, a kilometre to the west, at the point where the River Pavllas met the Vivari Channel.

The growth of Roman settlement outside Butrint is undeniable, but Phases 1 and 2 of this suburb belonging to the 1st and 2nd century AD were hardly affluent. Moreover their material orientation, if it has any distinctive character, looked to Italy and Rome. The range of ceramics, mostly from the later 1st/2nd century, was limited, with local imitations, Italian wares and Pontic *sigillata*. The majority of early Roman coins from the suburb are Roman Provincial issues. Only two pre-Flavian Imperial issues, poorly preserved *asses* of the Julio-Claudian period, were found in the excavations (see Volume 6.2, Chapter 2). In addition, three Flavian issues can be ascribed to the period AD 69–96. By contrast, there are more coins from the 2nd century, with 21 from the reign of Trajan through to Commodus (AD 98–192). It is interesting to note that until the appearance of silver radiates in the middle of the 3rd century, all of the coins are of base metal. *Asses* and *dupondii* are dominant in the 1st century, increasingly giving way to *sestertii* in the 2nd century, until the *sestertius* becomes dominant in the 3rd century. All the coins were minted at Rome.

Discussion

The discovery of a small Roman gridded settlement on the Vrina Plain has altered our perception of Butrint as a Roman town. To begin with this was not a suburb but a

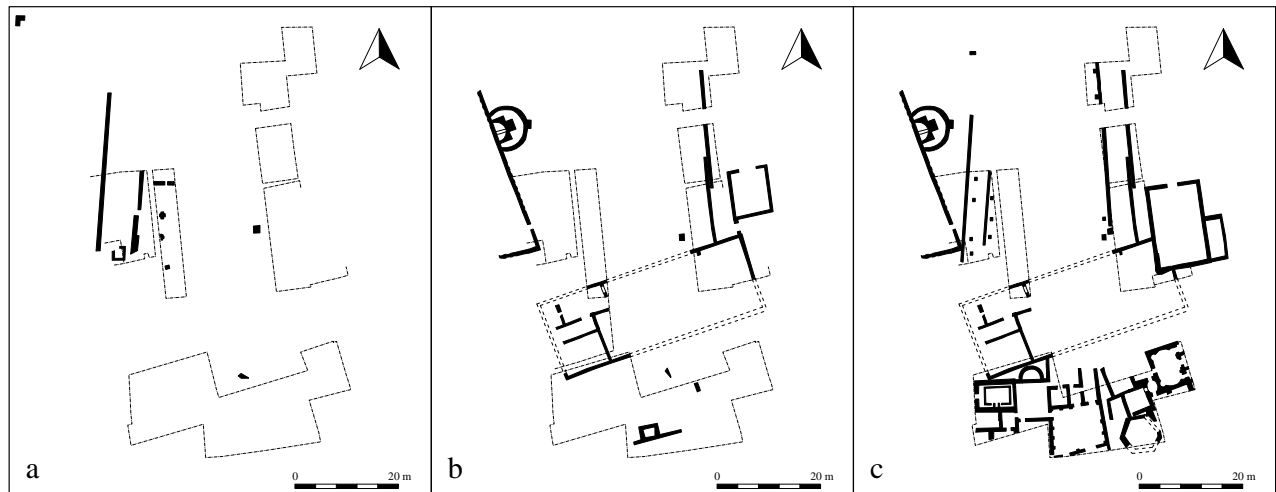


Figure 12.4. Plan of the villa at Diaporit: (a) pre-Roman; (b) 1st century AD; (c) 2nd century AD

bridgehead extension of the extra-mural settlement that expanded first beyond the Hellenistic walls of Butrint to the Vivari Channel, then to the south side of that channel. Conceived perhaps in the early years of the Augustan colony, this extension only really took shape in the Flavian period. Interestingly, Abdy tentatively proposes on the basis of the abbreviation CCIB used on the revived Claudio-Neronian coinage that this suburb might have been the *Colonia Campestris Iulia Buthrotum*, the ‘field colony’.²⁹ Following this, judging principally from the ceramic-dated stratigraphic evidence, the bridgehead community grew by stages over the following two centuries to become eventually a mirror image of the large channel-side dwellings on the north side of the Vivari Channel. None of this should really surprise us.

Does this mean that the new settlement and its land occupied previously public areas, or that some fields were taken from previous late Republican landowners, marking gradual changes in the administration of Butrint coinciding with the Emperor Nero’s increased interest in Butrint?³⁰ Further excavations will be required to define such administrative changes. Abdy, however, has made the interesting case for magisterial stability in the colony between Augustan and Neronian times as the magistrate, Graecinus, appears to have had a long career as a *duumvir* then a *duumvir quinquennalis*,

the most prestigious civic office when the *duoviri* had to organise the five-yearly tax census. Finally, he became the *duumvir quinq tert*, showing that he achieved the very top office of *duumvir quinquennalis* three times.³¹

Associated with the villa at Diaporit by virtue of a tile stamp discovered in the excavations,³² there is no doubting Graecinus’s role in creating a stable evolution of the colony. Less certain is the impact on the settlement of the redesignation of this northern area of Achaia to the new province of Epirus under the Emperor Trajan at the beginning of the 2nd century AD.³³ With this redesignation, exploitation of the interior was systematically extended

with the making of the new town of Hadrianopolis, near modern Gjirokastra, and its centuriated hinterland.³⁴

On the other hand, the broad outlines of the Romanisation of Butrint’s hinterland are not unique in this area. A similar new development at the (north-facing) base of Phoenice (at the north end of Lake Butrint) was found by Luigi Maria Ugolini and has been mapped by the University of Bologna team in recent years.³⁵ Like the Vrina Plain settlement, the lower Phoenice settlement was laid out in the later 1st century AD with gravelled streets,³⁶ and was occupied until at least the 2nd century before it became a necropolis. In this case the steep west flank of Phoenice separates the two parts of the town, as opposed to the Vivari Channel. Further afield, it is exactly at this time too that the Achaian colonies of Nicopolis, Patras and Corinth appear to have developed intensive new farming regimes based upon centuriation for their associated territories.³⁷ Thus the new initiative at Butrint was not exceptional; it belonged to a larger Roman programme to invest in, and of course tax, Achaia. As Alcock points out, the size of an ancient city’s demographic base proved an important factor in its sustainability; this would have been especially true for smaller centres such as Butrint. Knowing more about this ‘base’, not only in terms of the chronology of the dispersed villas and farms but also in terms of their histories, serves as an important variable in measuring the urban history of a port like Butrint.³⁸

There can be little doubt that Butrint’s expansion onto the Vrina Plain is an approximate measure of both an effort to boost the town’s productive population as well as its increasing prosperity. The first dwellings were modest by any standards, but the grid of gravel streets shows the city’s intent. In terms of prosperity, the creation of a maritime villa at Diaporit in place of the earlier Hellenistic and Augustan arrangement is perhaps the most telling illustration (Fig. 12.4). At some point in the period AD 40–80 – approximately at the time the Emperor Nero visited Greece – the maritime villa was rebuilt on a larger scale, and as Bowden observes: ‘the orientation ... was



Figure 12.5. View of the villa of Diaporit looking southwest towards Butrint

completely altered in this phase so that the buildings faced directly towards Butrint, perhaps reflecting the increasing significance of the town in the eyes of its owner' (Fig. 12.5).³⁹ While not grandiose, this villa, like the new town housing of Butrint (best illustrated by the property on the south-facing edge of the acropolis⁴⁰), echoed the colony's cultural ethos on this Grecian shore.

We should assume that the town was benefiting from its seaborne commerce and a growing population. A comparable suburb at *Arelate* (Arles) perhaps offers a hint of what was to be found at this bridgehead: essentially a mixture of commercial, public and domestic buildings as well as docks, granaries, production areas and porticoed spaces associated with trades.⁴¹ Here, in other words, was an intersection of agrarian, fishing, industrial and mercantile activities, all with an eye on connections across the Adriatic Sea to Italy.

The suburb was well placed to manage the landscape to the east as well as Butrint's affluent fishing-grounds. It was a richly endowed quintessential Roman micro-region in the sense described by Horden and Purcell.⁴² That this suburb altered over time, evolving into one or more moderately affluent villas before it became one large villa in the 3rd century, is possibly more intriguing. What happened, we might now wonder, to those earlier bridgehead amenities from the generations following the colonial period? No ready answers are yet apparent.

This was the era during which monumental tombs were erected for the first time on the Vrina Plain and smaller tombs were also interred on Shën Dimitri, alongside the earlier road. Neither area had been employed as a cemetery in the later Hellenistic period, unlike Phoenice where

the new 1st-century AD lower town partly occupied an earlier Hellenistic cemetery.⁴³ By Butrint standards neither cemetery – on the Vrina Plain or on Shën Dimitri – is exceptional. Finer tombs lined the Vivari Channel west of the town⁴⁴ and outside the Lion Gate. Richer cremation graves were also found by Ugolini on the elevated spur west of the West Gate of the town.

Butrint, of course, was not insulated from the greater changes occurring in the Empire and especially in Italy. Harbingers of the 3rd-century crisis are perhaps to be found first beyond the bridge across the Vivari Channel. The desertion of the villa at Diaporit in the later 2nd century following constant alterations and aggrandisement to the complex throughout the preceding part of the century⁴⁵ – and probably the desertion of other such properties within the hinterland of Butrint – coincided with marked changes to the suburb. The process appears to parallel that found at Nicopolis, with major villas being founded in the shadow of the town's defences as the number of rural sites declined.⁴⁶ Urban living, it appears, was becoming more attractive, even if the overall economic prosperity of the urban centres in the region was beginning to stall, before actually declining. To document this process much more information is needed about the farms within the old centuriated landscape; at Butrint these currently remain unknown. As for investment in pastoral activities or fishing, very little evidence exists, notwithstanding the extensive scale of these excavations. Finally, what is now clear is that the suburb belongs to the moment when the *Pax Romana* appears to have extended its reach to just about every region and village. At Butrint the suburb was an extension that morphed into the centuriated landscape

beyond. The revolution that began here in Augustan times appears, however, to have ended in the later 2nd century when the suburb was transformed into a major property. This went through further iterations as an ecclesiastical complex then an aristocratic central-place in Late Antiquity and the mid-Byzantine periods respectively, and with this the attached, highly controlled landscape gradually became detached from Butrint.

Notes

- 1 Harris 2005, 33.
- 2 Cf. Hansen 2011.
- 3 Cabanes *et al.* 2007, 249; Deniaux 1998; 2007; 2009, 17–20; Hansen 2007; 2011; Hernandez and Çondi 2008; 2014.
- 4 Hansen 2007; 2009; 2011.
- 5 Hernandez and Çondi 2014.
- 6 Hansen 2007; 2013.
- 7 Abdy 2012, 91–2.
- 8 Cf. Hodges 2016.
- 9 Cf. Bowden and Hodges 2011.
- 10 Gilkes and Hysa 2011.
- 11 For more information on the late Republican material from the aqueduct pier see Volume 6.3, Chapter 7.
- 12 Cf. Crowson 2008, 49 (top figure).
- 13 Hodges *et al.* 2016, 1–29.
- 14 Bowden and Përzhita 2004b.
- 15 Leppard 2013.
- 16 See Bescoby, Chapter 2; Wilson 2013.
- 17 Cf. Wilson 2013, 85–6, fig. 5.14.
- 18 Gilkes and Hysa 2011.
- 19 Lane *et al.* 2004, 42–3.
- 20 Bowden and Hodges 2011; Hodges 2016.
- 21 Gilkes and Hysa 2011.
- 22 Bescoby 2007, 113.
- 23 Bowden 2007, 198; Romano 2003.
- 24 Bescoby 2007, 113.
- 25 Cf. Hodges *et al.* 2016.
- 26 Bescoby 2007, fig. 7.7.
- 27 Crowson and Gilkes 2006, 148–54, fig. 8.1.
- 28 Gilkes and Hysa 2011.
- 29 Abdy 2012, 93.
- 30 Alcock 1993, 16.
- 31 Abdy 2012, 93.
- 32 Bowden and Përzhita 2004b; Hansen 2009, 59.
- 33 Cabanes 1997, 120.
- 34 Giorgi and Bogdani 2012, 129.
- 35 De Maria 2007, 183; Giorgi and Bogdani 2012, 118–20.
- 36 See Giorgi and Bogdani 2012, 120, fig. 6.
- 37 Cf. Alcock 1993, 132–45; Romano 2003.
- 38 Alcock 1993, 171.
- 39 Bowden 2007, 205.
- 40 Greenslade *et al.* 2013, 53–5.
- 41 Droste 2003, 77–9.
- 42 Horden and Purcell 2000, 100–01.
- 43 De Maria 2007, 183.
- 44 Hernandez and Mitchell 2013.
- 45 Bowden and Përzhita 2004b.
- 46 Wiseman 2001, 56–7.

13 From villa to church, c. AD 250–550?

Simon Greenslade and Richard Hodges

By the third century AD, Greece had been under formal (let alone informal) Roman control for some two hundred years, decades longer than the North American colonies survived under British dominion, and a century or so longer than the entire lifespan of the Aztec empire. Empires are dynamic, with continual internal shifts and readjustments inevitably calling forth change within all their constituent elements.

Alcock¹

Like houses from Elvis' Graceland to Tony Soprano's suburban mansion, late Roman houses were tiny pieces of science fiction, calling into being an alternate reality for their owners. Such houses did not mirror shared social experience – they sought to change it.

Bowes²

Approaching Butrint by boat from the Straits of Corfu, sailing up the Vivari Channel, or taking the land route leading across the lower-lying ground from the north–south littoral road connecting Dyrrachium to Nicopolis (as depicted on the Peutinger Table), the most dominant feature of the mid-Roman town would have been the

villa on the Vrina Plain. Once Butrint was enclosed by new fortifications in the early 6th century, the complex dominated by a basilica on the Vrina Plain, isolated beyond the defences, would have been even more conspicuous (Fig. 13.1). For the inhabitants of the Vrina Plain settlement, views over the water would have been a key element of the evolving architecture. Of course, views over water had long been part of the architectural vocabulary of élite building in Epirus and were a motif of status throughout the Roman Mediterranean.³ Both the villa and its successor complex with its substantial church were clearly stationed to take advantage of their position in the landscape, each with ample space to expand on the plain, free of the tight property divisions within Butrint itself. While separated by three centuries, both settlements – the villa and the ecclesiastical complex – undoubtedly aimed through their scale and position to create an alternate reality that we must be careful not to exaggerate.

The villa

Much has been now published on the comparable houses on



Figure 13.1. Aerial view of the Vrina Plain excavations with Butrint beyond

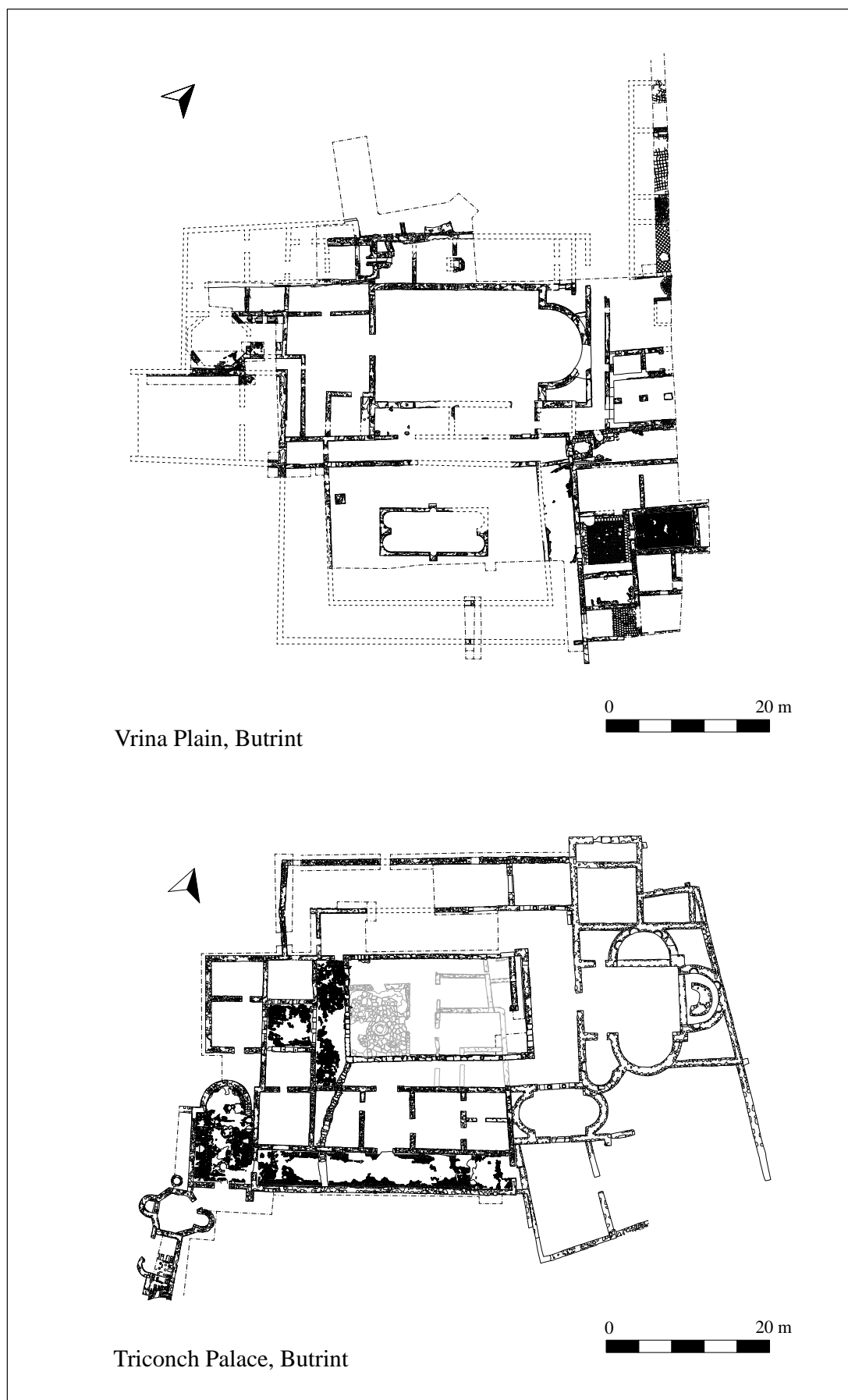


Figure 13.2. Comparative plans of the Vrina Plain domus and the Triconch Palace in the early 5th century

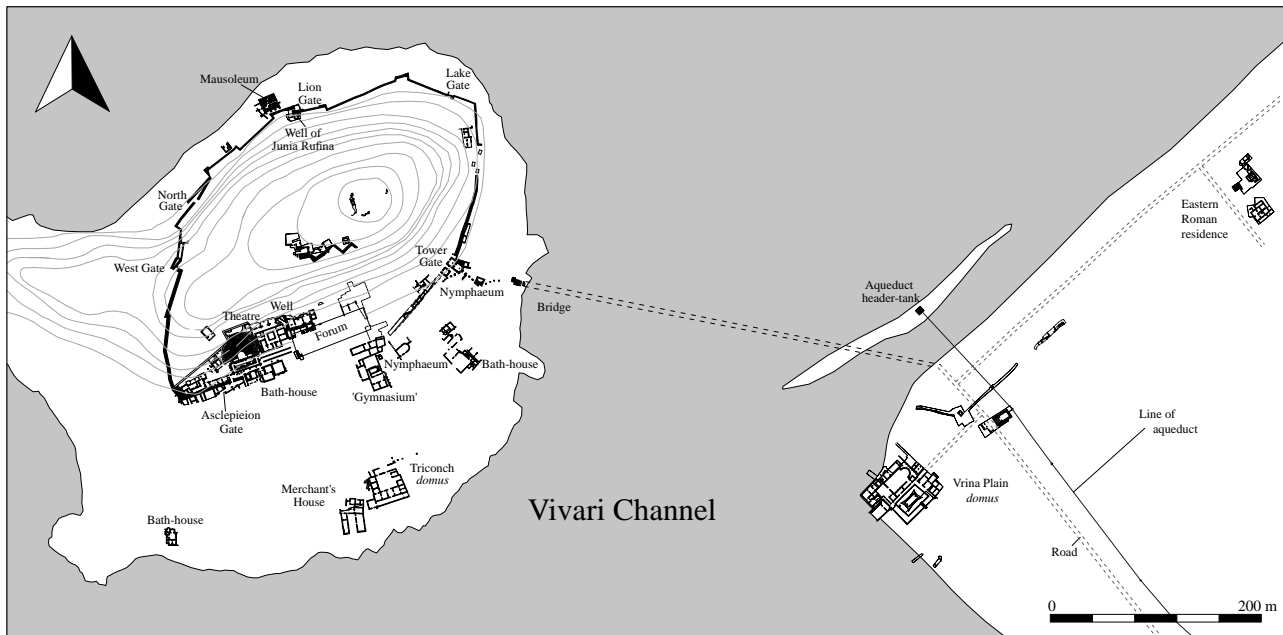


Figure 13.3. The topography of the Vrina Plain and Butrint from the mid-3rd century AD

the north side of the Vivari Channel, focusing principally upon the Triconch Palace,⁴ but a short discussion of the Vrina Plain site is merited for two reasons: its considerable size and the successor settlement containing a major basilica. From the 3rd century AD this villa appears to have been the largest private property at Butrint. It is almost double the size in terms of area of the Triconch Palace at its unfinished zenith in the early 5th century (Fig. 13.2). Given this size and location, we cannot doubt that this villa was intended to be conspicuous. In most respects, it bears comparison with the sprawling Villa of Manius Antoninus immediately outside the walls at Nicopolis (see Fig. 4.92),⁵ although the latter was hardly conspicuous to travellers and citizens of the 'Victory City'. Like the Villa of Manius Antoninus, which was a coalition of several earlier properties, the outline arrangement of the Vrina Plain villa was shaped by an earlier *insula* of aggregated buildings. The transformation of these 2nd-century buildings into a new design shows that commanding this location beside the road bridge with its implicit visibility was of great concern to its new owner (Fig. 13.3).

The main entrance of the Vrina Plain villa in the 3rd century, as far as we can tell, faced the deep inlet off the Vivari Channel, indicating that its architectural presence aimed, above all, to impress water-borne visitors rather than those approaching the town by the inland road. As a town-house, its architecture strived to impose itself upon the other affluent citizens inhabiting smaller town-houses, like the *domus* that preceded the Triconch Palace, on the north side of the Vivari Channel.⁶ The elements of the house exposed in the excavations certainly conveyed the alternative reality of its owners (Fig. 13.4). By the 4th century, the main entrance from the deep inlet was almost certainly aggrandised by an octagonal tower,

which must have been visible from the Straits of Corfu, 3 km to the west. Almost immediate accessibility to the main audience chamber – presumably the *triclinium* – was essential.⁷ This large apsidal *triclinium* lay parallel to the Vivari Channel (on an approximately east–west axis), creating a similar sense of grandiosity to that of the marine entrance. As Kim Bowes has pointed out, major apsed spaces are particularly common in later Roman rural villas: 'its form was prized *qua* form, a jewel-like addition to wall surfaces, an intimate spatial pendant to vast courtyards and entrances.'⁸ It was part of a late antique architectural aesthetic. The first courtyard was dominated by a large ornamental water feature typical of the architectural display of the era, intended to restate the social supremacy of its owner. Beyond this, the arrangement of the complex, being almost certainly a coalescing of earlier structures, is less clear. As a property, though, at its zenith it extended as far as the terminus of the road at the Butrint bridge linking the town to the region inland (Fig. 13.5). Immediately beyond the road lay an elevated temple mausoleum of an imposing type, sufficient to inform any land traveller of the status of the adjacent property. Such was its importance to the property that the existing road was adapted to it, rather than the other way around. Within it were found fragments of Attic-style sarcophagi of the highest sculptural calibre.

How are we to interpret this sprawling complex with its hierarchically arranged internal spaces and its ready access to water and land communications? Traditionally, it would be attributed to an accumulation of wealth after the 3rd-century political reforms impacted upon Greece.⁹ But is the villa really a response to declining civic participation, and an increased ruralisation of the élite as they eschewed participation in municipal management?¹⁰ Or, as in the case

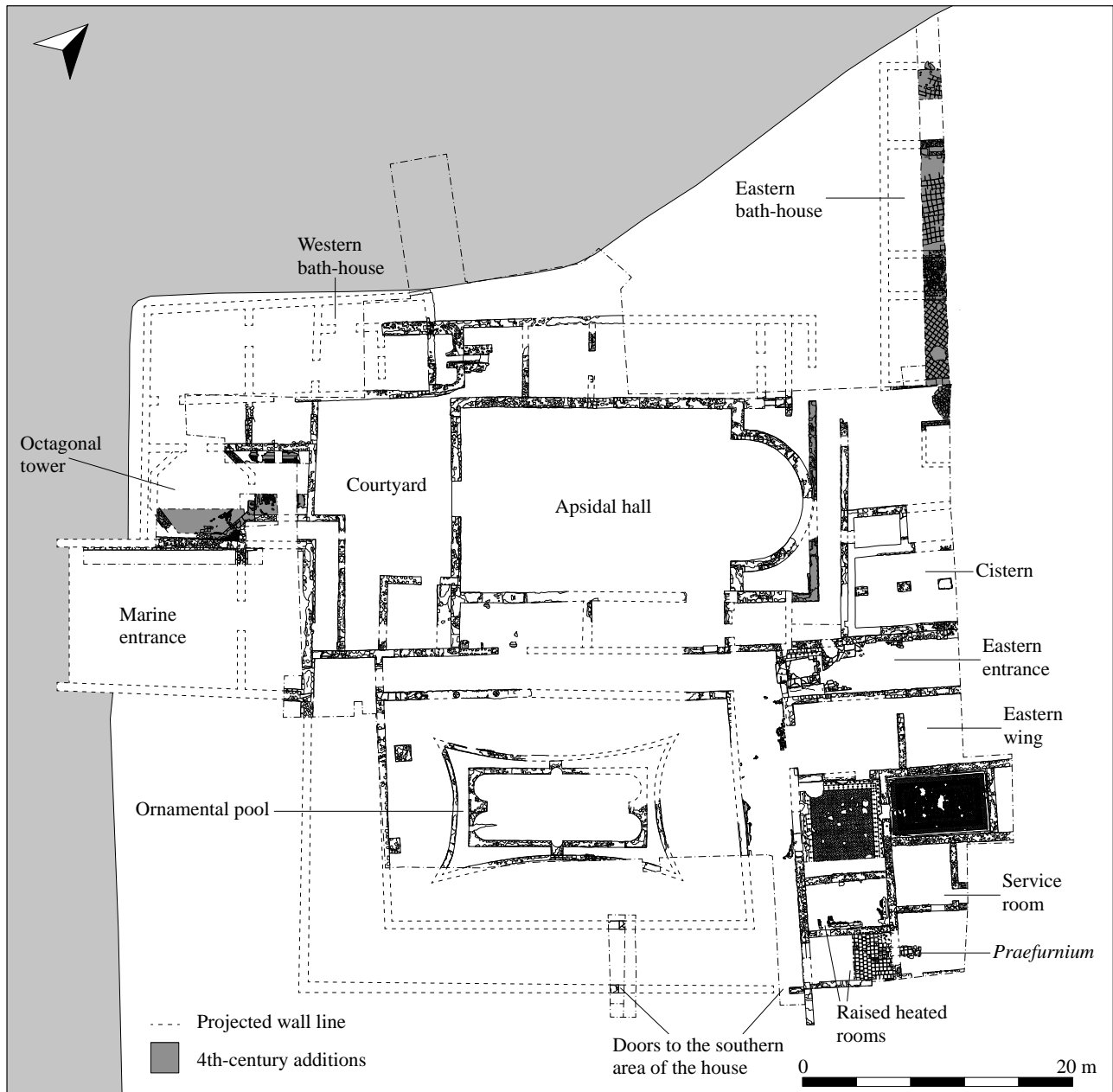


Figure 13.4. The Vrina Plain domus in Phase 3 (mid-3rd to mid-4th century AD)

of the earlier *domus* occupying the later Triconch Palace area within Butrint, does the grandiosity of the architectural vocabulary (along with the Attic-style sarcophagi) mark the ascendancy of a domineering patronage over provincial inferiors and their own tenants?¹¹

The coin evidence provided by Moorhead¹² tends to indicate that the 3rd-century property was apparently flourishing when the forum area was not. Changes to the local economy were definitely taking place. Certainly by the 4th or 5th century, judging from the 1995–96 field survey of the Vrina Plain and surrounding areas, most earlier farms belonging to the centuriated hinterland had been vacated and were not reoccupied until the 6th century, and then only on a modest scale.¹³ No comparable extra-mural villa

existed within Butrint's immediate hinterland in this era.

A century or so after its construction, the villa was no less affluent when it was struck by a seismic event. The full impact of this earthquake about AD 360 is best measured by the manner in which it violently contorted the pavement of the forum in Butrint.¹⁴ Did it induce a tsunami as well that would have engulfed this channel-side settlement?¹⁵ The archaeology of this event was most apparent in the evidence from Phase 4. An unusual double inhumation burial from this period was found in a shallow grave, connoting symbolically perhaps the end of the property. In fact, it was not to be the end of this great house. In the later 4th or early 5th century, just as the design for the largest dwelling on the Triconch Palace property was being

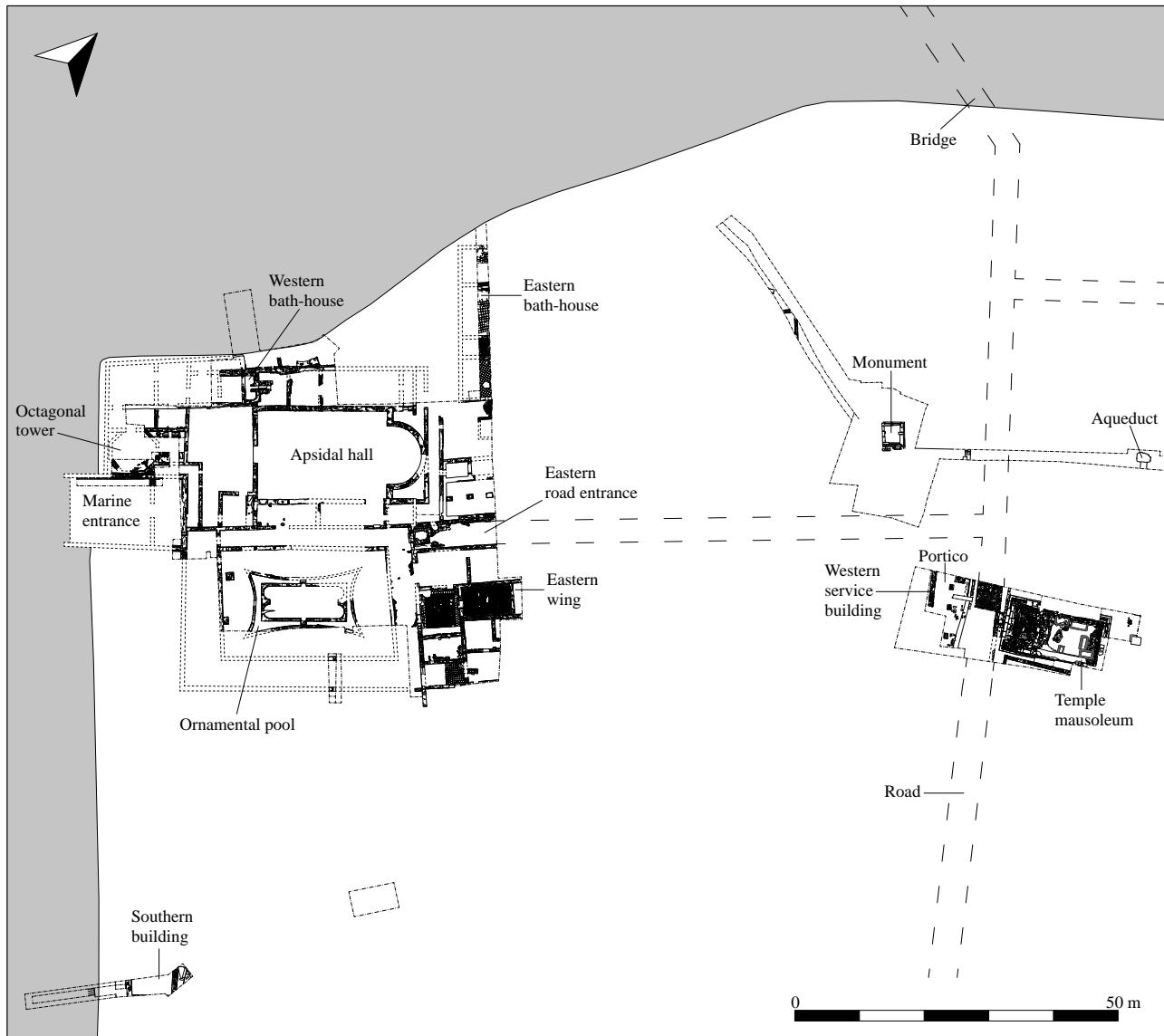


Figure 13.5. The Vrina Plain in Phase 3 (mid-3rd to mid-4th century AD)

conceived on the opposite shore of the Vivari Channel, the apse of the 3rd-century apsidal hall was repaired with two buttress walls to support it (Fig. 13.6). At this time too, the southern courtyard was partially levelled over leaving only the inner pool of the central feature in use. These makeshift changes were presumably intended to make the old residence habitable. Plentiful pottery, much of it imported, as well as significant loss of small coin denominations, demonstrate that the property was, for a generation or possibly more, once again active in regional commerce (Fig. 13.7). In the end though, the consequences of the earthquake and the possibility of continued seismic activity in the region induced the desertion of the villa by the middle of the 5th century. The rising water table, which would appear to explain the unfinished palace project at the Triconch,¹⁶ may also have been a factor in the abandonment, as was the collapse of the aqueduct which would have left the community without a constant supply of fresh water.

In addition to these environmental factors, it is clear that Butrint as a place was in the throes of changing, with a new authority becoming apparent in its urban topography.

The ecclesiastical settlement

The transformation of a villa into an ecclesiastical settlement is not uncommon; many similar examples can now be listed.¹⁷ This occurred as the Vrina Plain was formally defined as an extra-mural suburbium of Butrint with the construction of a new circuit of fortifications early in the 6th century. These new walls followed the line of the Vivari Channel for the first time, and symbolically altered the status of the 500-year-old settlement on the south side of the channel.¹⁸ Several other factors also need to be considered as the old villa complex became dominated by a basilica and, we assume, took on a new identity. First, the water table had risen after the seismic episode in the

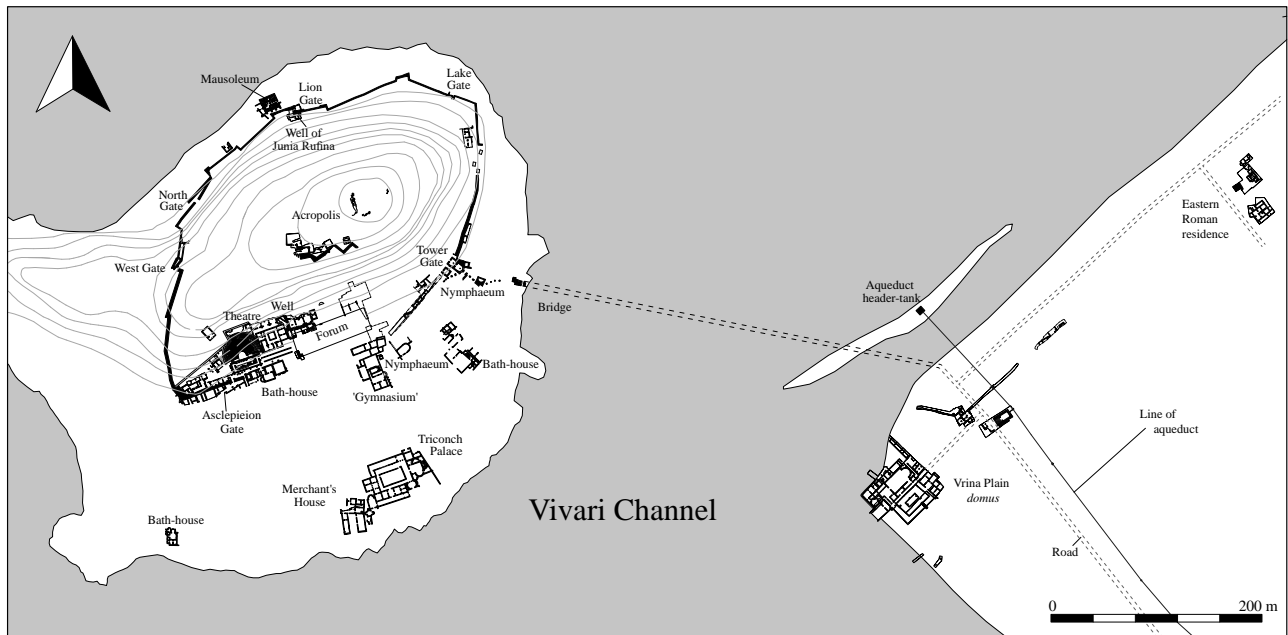


Figure 13.6. The topography of the Vrina Plain and Butrint in the early 5th century AD

later 4th century, altering the configurations of the channel by this time. Second, although it is far from clear whether the road bridge over the Vivari Channel was still operative, the fact that the road fronting the Temple mausoleum was resurfaced at this time, and that the new fortifications appear to have respected the northern end of the bridge, suggest it was still in use. Thirdly, the construction of the Great Basilica and Baptistery in Butrint itself, as well as other churches, points to the ascent of a new political authority in the urban management of Butrint.¹⁹ Certainly, bishops are listed for Butrint from the 5th century.²⁰ With this palpable transformation of the ancient city, it should not therefore surprise us that on the Vrina Plain, beyond the new city walls, a successor settlement was shaped around a major basilica (Fig. 13.8). After all, the rise of the Church is the hallmark of most later Roman towns and their suburbs in the central Mediterranean. What remains to be resolved is the function of the settlement after *c.* AD 500 once it contained this basilica.

Churches are, of course, readily recognised and represent the best-known urban architectural form in Late Antiquity. As a result, their importance has almost certainly been exaggerated. On the face of it, the Church dominated the topography of late Roman towns in the southern Adriatic region. Nicopolis is an obvious benchmark, with many great churches of this period, accompanied by small ensembles of associated stone-built structures.²¹ Smaller inland towns were no different: the townscape of upland Byllis, for example, was dominated by its ecclesiastical monuments and their associated buildings.²² On the west side of the Adriatic Sea in Apulia, the topography of Egnatia, for example, was similar.²³ Yet the burst of church-building at Butrint, as in other urban contexts, appears to reflect a new

social competitiveness rather than a sudden switch to Christianity. Accompanying the construction of Butrint's new city walls, its new churches surely mark an episode of renewed urban investment (and consumption) that lasted little more than a generation.

The range of churches in Butrint, as in other Epirote towns, almost follows a pattern-book formula that strongly suggests intense local competitiveness. The Great Basilica, ascribed to this period, occupied a zone beside the Vivari Channel that was elevated above episodic rises in the water table.²⁴ This, it has been assumed, was the bishop's church, its proximity to the Baptistery being the significant indicator of its status. Apart from its location above any elevated water in the winter, the Great Basilica lay beside both the Water Gate and the northern terminus of the old Roman bridge. In other words, it was situated at the inner entrance to Butrint for those arriving either by water or overland from points to the east. In its own way the Vrina Plain complex was situated in a similar position to the Great Basilica, only this time it would have been the 'outer', eastern entrance to the city for those using either of these routes.

The basilica undoubtedly was the most prominent building in the complex and its rhetoric was embellished by a series of fine mosaic pavements in the nave and sanctuary, the former of which had two dedicatory Greek inscriptions incorporated into it. Although the benefactors did not name themselves, this act of apparent humility may have been a new form of social display for competing élites, the inscription being an effective means of social display within a community who would have known who the individuals were.²⁵

In contrast to the newly built basilica, many parts of the older villa were refurbished in a makeshift fashion

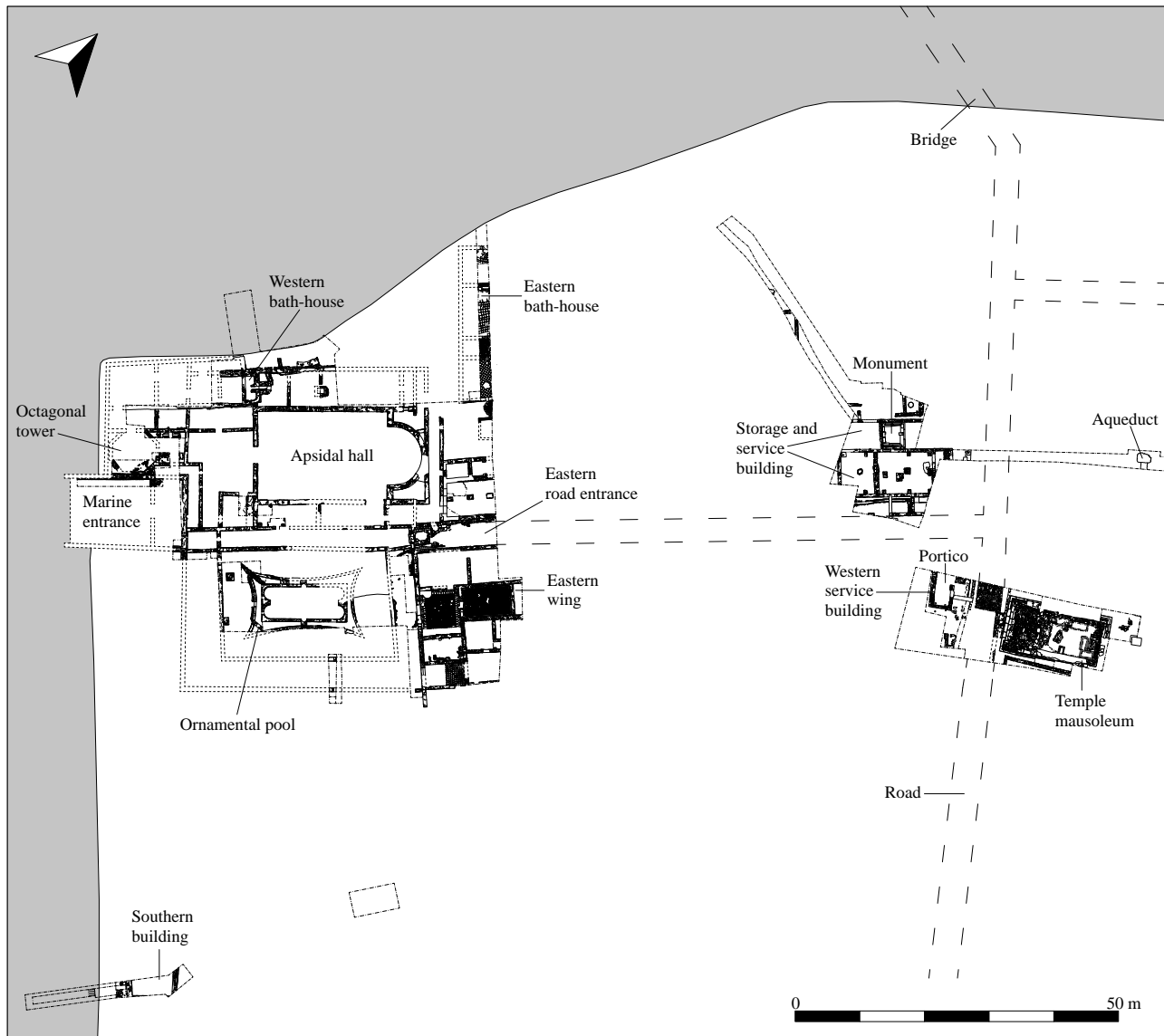


Figure 13.7. The Vrina Plain in Phase 5 (early 5th century)

(Fig. 13.9). Immediately east of the basilica the northern rooms of the 2nd-century cistern were transformed into a bath-house, while several of the rooms of the villa's eastern wing, alongside the earlier peristyle garden, remained in use. Likewise, on the west side of the nave of the basilica lay a series of small interconnected rooms, one of which had a second floor. Farther afield, to the northeast, close to the monuments on the channel side and at the terminus of the old road on the north side of the *vicus* and villa, lay a small apsed building that was probably a chapel of some kind. Viewed from afar, this was a complex of some size amounting to many different parts, of which the bath-house and the basilica were only two readily identifiable parts, with outlying elements reaching to the old road leading from the bridgehead to points east (Fig. 13.10).

Turning to the new topographic circumstances, the orientation of the 6th-century church lies at right-angles to that of the earlier apsed *triclinium*. Indeed, it is oriented

more or less north–south. This could be interpreted as an expedient response to the perilous condition of the apse of the earlier *triclinium* following the 4th-century earthquake, or alternatively that the axis was determined as a result of the new access to the site. Whereas the earlier villa had been entered from the deep inlet to the west, the location of the inner and outer narthex of the church, as well as the attached bath-house on the east side of the building, strongly suggests that the complex was approached from the Vivari Channel instead. The presence of the small apsed chapel at the shoreline terminus of the road supports this. From here, a visitor approached the complex by following the shoreline, perhaps engaging in necessary ablutions in the small bath-house before entering the church through the narthex.

Bath-houses are a common feature of Late Antique ecclesiastical sites in Epirus Vetus. A similar bath-house was found at Diaporit to the south of that church, on

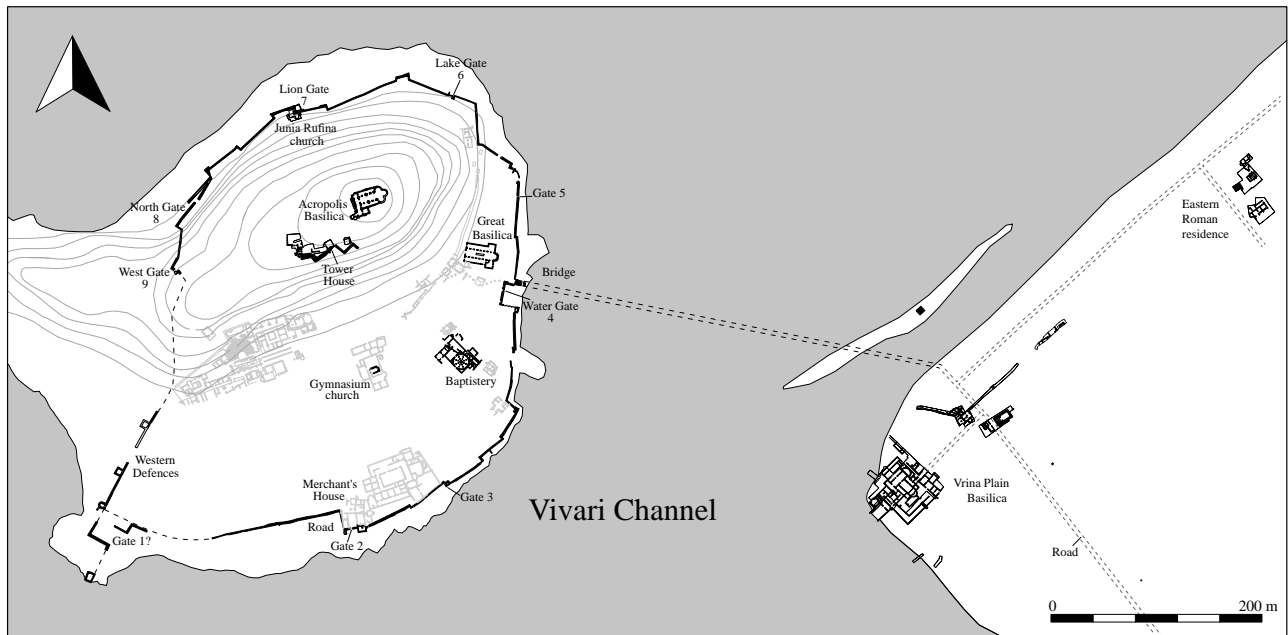


Figure 13.8. The topography of the Vrina Plain and Butrint in the early 6th century AD

the approach from the lake to the church (Fig. 13.11). Likewise, a substantial bath-house was located on the north side of the church of the Forty Martyrs at Santa Quaranta above *Onchesmos*, ancient Saranda.²⁶ At the Forty Martyrs, unquestionably a major ecclesiastical centre of metropolitan dimensions, the bath-house formed part of a range of buildings, certain of which were probably for accommodation beside the church (Fig. 13.12), but this accommodation was limited to a linear range alongside the basilica.²⁷ A small rectangular building was also found close to the bath-house at Diaporit, providing accommodation and storage of some kind.²⁸ As we have shown, the basilica and bath-house on the Vrina Plain were associated with many more buildings and rooms refashioned within the fabric of the earlier villa (Fig. 13.13). Unfortunately, the function of these rooms associated with the basilica is not clear. Unlike the Triconch Palace area, stratigraphic evidence of on-site activities was not found.²⁹ Were these rooms simply part of a major town-house (by the standards of the time), albeit one that had seen better times or, as the large basilica suggests, part of an ecclesiastical complex, that is a monastery or pilgrimage centre?

The material culture and economy of the complex offers no obvious clues to its function. Apart from the obvious ecclesiastical features, such as the dedicatory inscription in the mosaic pavement, the rich array of imported tablewares and amphorae, glass vessels and small amount of metalwork shed no light on the daily activities of this place. Coins are not numerous, but are broadly similar in number to those found in the excavations at the Triconch Palace site in Butrint and at nearby Diaporit. The faunal remains broadly show a continuity of livestock management from the earlier villa. In short, there is no real means of distinguishing whether this was a secular or ecclesiastical community.

But then, the archaeology of monasticism has not, so far, identified any tell-tale indices that might distinguish such a place from a secular household with a proprietary church. Only the scale of the church in comparison with the rest of the site suggests it was primarily an ecclesiastical complex, as at Diaporit, and of course, Santa Quaranta (where no such doubt exists).

Discussion

Located almost directly opposite the line of major town-houses along the north side of the Vviri Channel, including the so-called Merchant's House and *domus*, then its unfinished successor, the so-called Triconch Palace, it is clear that the Vrina Plain villa, for all its extensive scale, is only one of many such large channel-side houses at Butrint. The channel, it appears was a 'hotspot' of social competition, brought about by the Diocletianic and Constantinian social and economic reforms.³⁰ These reforms required massive recruitment of military and bureaucratic personnel, and generated differing tributary outcomes in Greece.³¹ Diocletian elevated many to a new equestrian status, and the order expanded accordingly, creating new paths for advancement in the empire. These reforms were a response to a new, heterogeneous aristocracy, highly competitive in character, which in turn generated genuine competition for senatorial rank and, of course, competition in provincial contexts such as Epirus.

In the past, villas like the one at the bridgehead on the Vrina Plain have been interpreted as the result of a major transformation in land holdings, especially after the 3rd century. While the field survey evidence recording an increasing concentration of properties and the diminished wealth of the peasantry, principally tenant *coloni*, has been

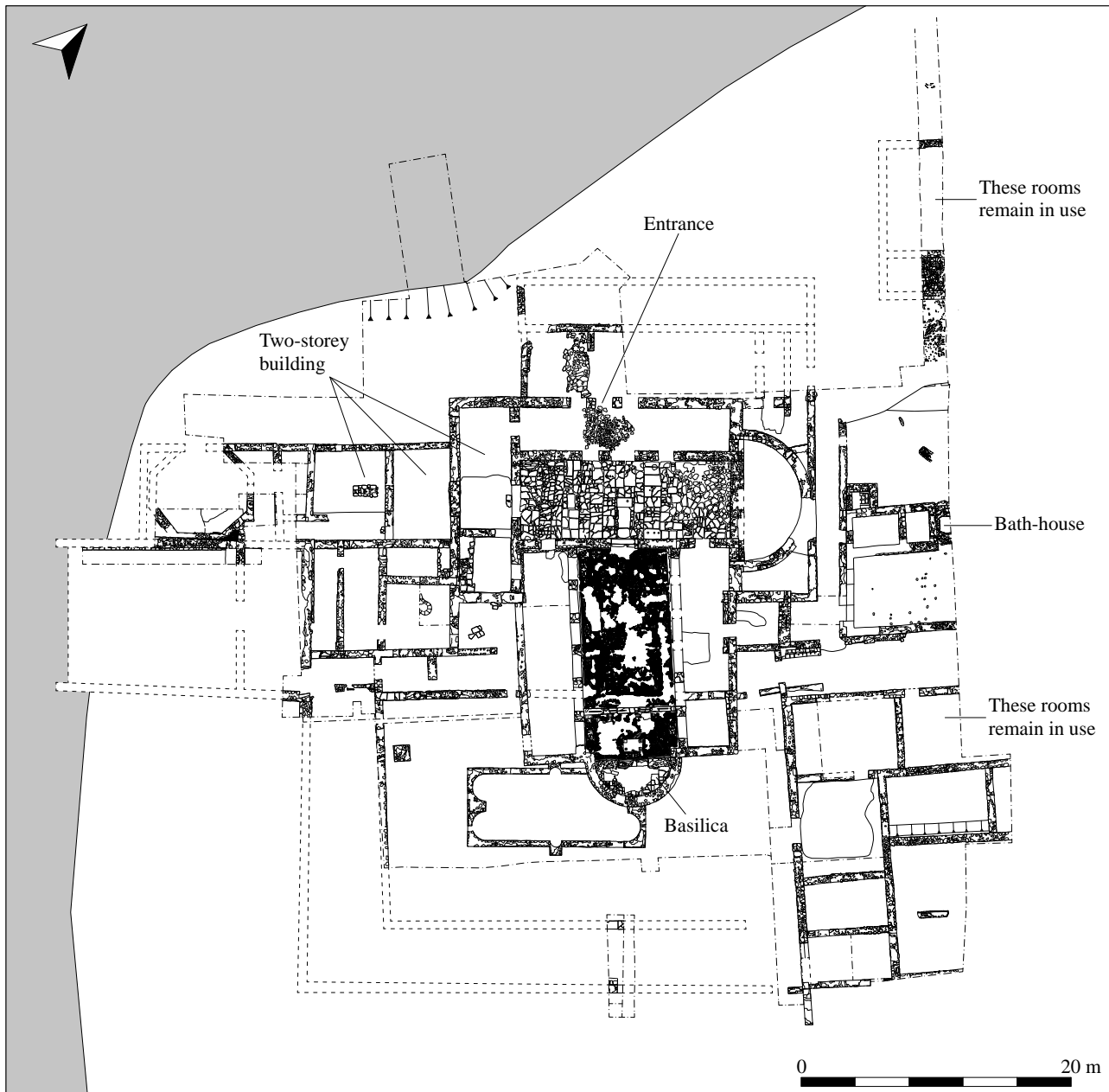


Figure 13.9. The Vrina Plain complex in the 6th century AD

challenged in recent years, at Butrint it would seem to be the case. Certainly it seems probable that the proprietor at the Vrina Plain bridgehead gained control of much of the old centuriated area east of Butrint.³² As such, the grandiose dwellings along the Vivari Channel cannot readily be ascribed to the creation of a new caste society or indeed the rise of a rent-collecting class. Instead, at this pivotal point in the central Mediterranean, these new homes would seem to reflect principally social competition brought about by significant social reforms.

Covering well over a hectare, it is tempting to interpret the Vrina villa like that of Manius Antoninus at Nicopolis: as a grandiloquent extra-mural showcase for a major citizen of Butrint. However, two factors argue against this. First,

as we have seen, it was one of several large channel-side villas – perhaps as many as half a dozen (including the Triconch Palace *domus* and the adjacent Merchant's House) – all of which were strictly outside the walled Hellenistic defences. Secondly, the mosaic pavements in the Vrina villa, along with its material culture (apart from its Attic sarcophagi), are generally unexceptional and certainly do not indicate that it was any more than the home of a provincial magnate. Its scale, especially its grandiose apsed *triclinium*, was plainly an architectural statement, constructed in 'a competitive discourse' with the neighbours on the opposite side of the channel.³³ Could it have been the home of an imperial bureaucrat – a forerunner of the Middle Byzantine aristocratic settlement that was to occupy

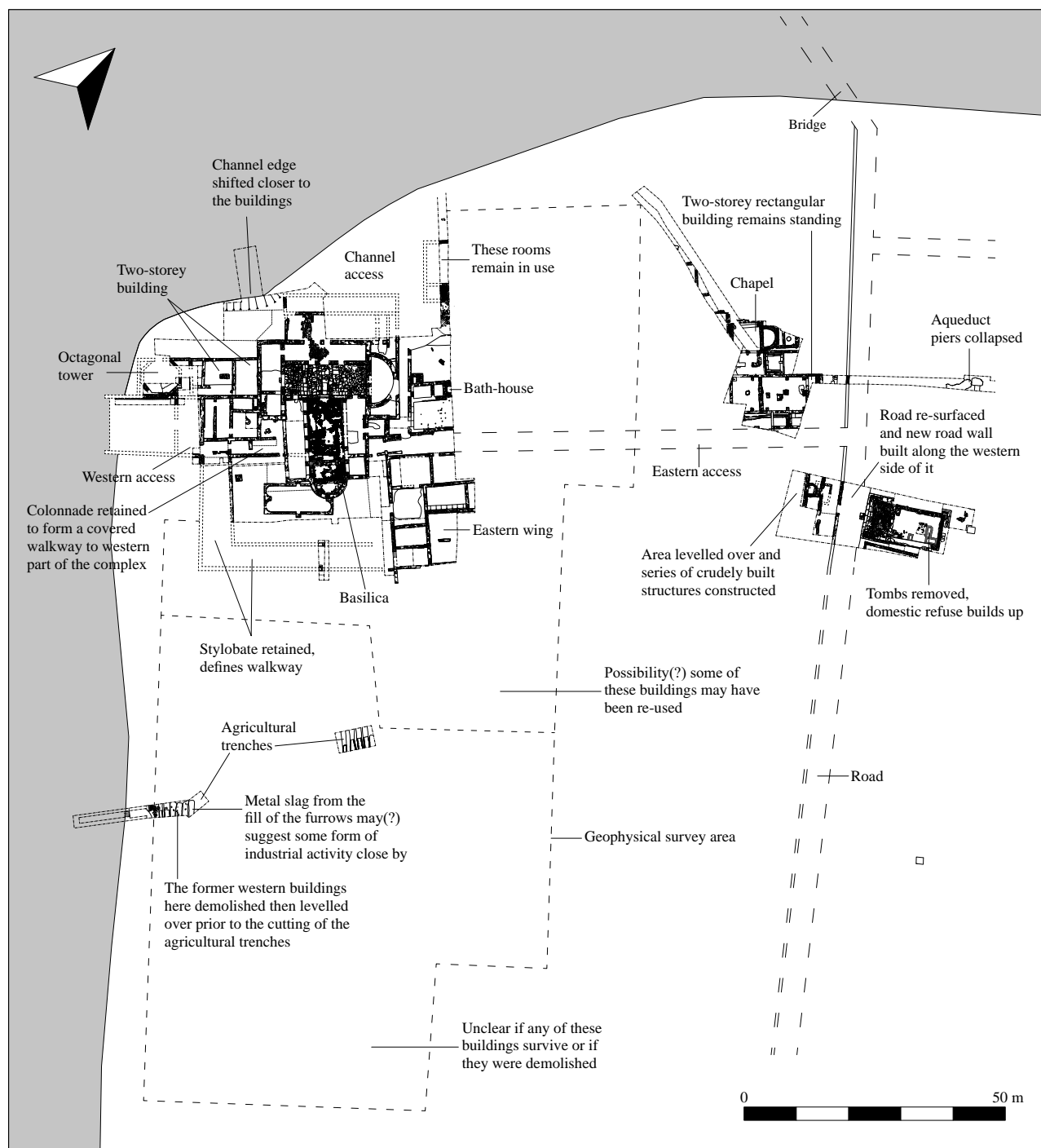


Figure 13.10. The Vrina Plain in Phase 7 (early 6th century)

this spot?³⁴ Unfortunately the evidence to affirm this did not survive. Unlike the 9th- to 10th-century material culture, nothing from the excavations apart from the fragments of Attic-style sarcophagi at the associated Temple mausoleum supports such an interpretation. Instead, if we are seeking a provincial bureaucrat, his home is perhaps indicated by the threshold inscription in the mosaic in the Triconch *domus* on the north side of the Vivari Channel.³⁵

Alcock has made the case for an increased distancing of Greece in Roman times from Rome. In other words,

by the 3rd century this province looked to its own social and economic arenas, and with time the pivot of influence shifted from Rome to Constantinople.³⁶ The fragments of Attic-style sarcophagi certainly take their stylistic references from Greece and even the eastern Mediterranean (see Chapter 8). On the other hand, being a port on the Ionian Sea, its ceramic assemblage demonstrates its wider connections. While many vessels do come from local sources, as many come from points to the north and indeed central Italy as from the Argolid,



Figure 13.11. View of the bath-house and basilica at Diaporit (photo Will Bowden)



Figure 13.12. Aerial view of the church of the Forty Martyrs at Santa Quaranta

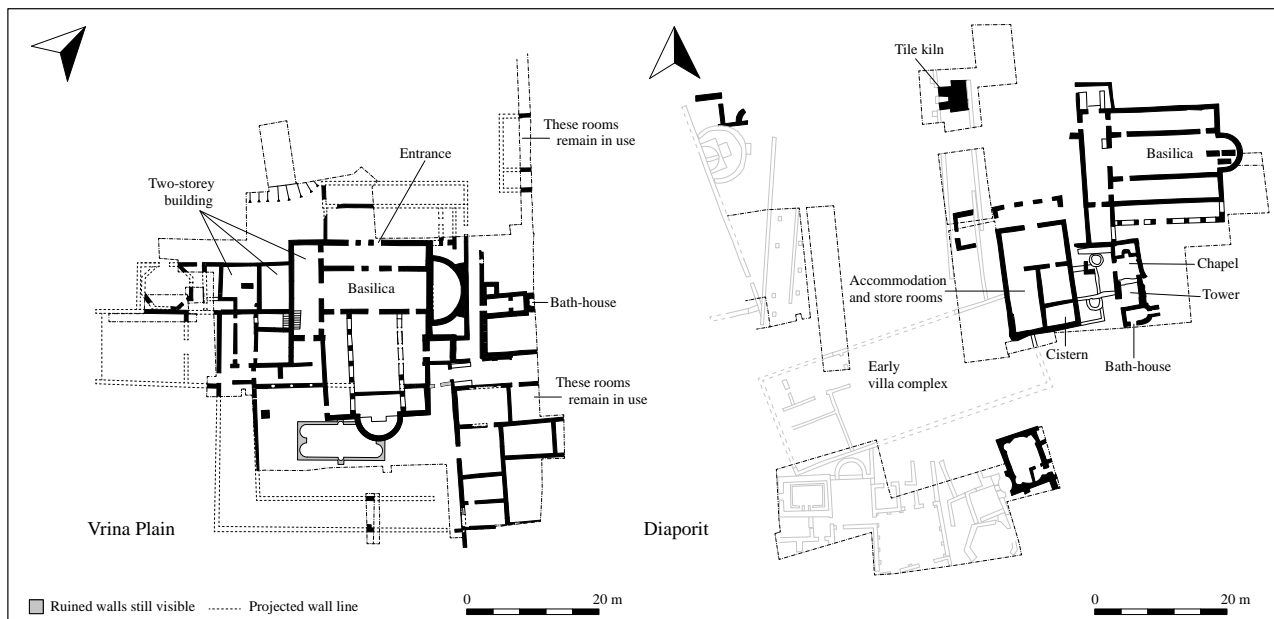


Figure 13.13. Plans of the early 6th-century basilicas and surrounding buildings on the Vrina Plain and at Diaporit

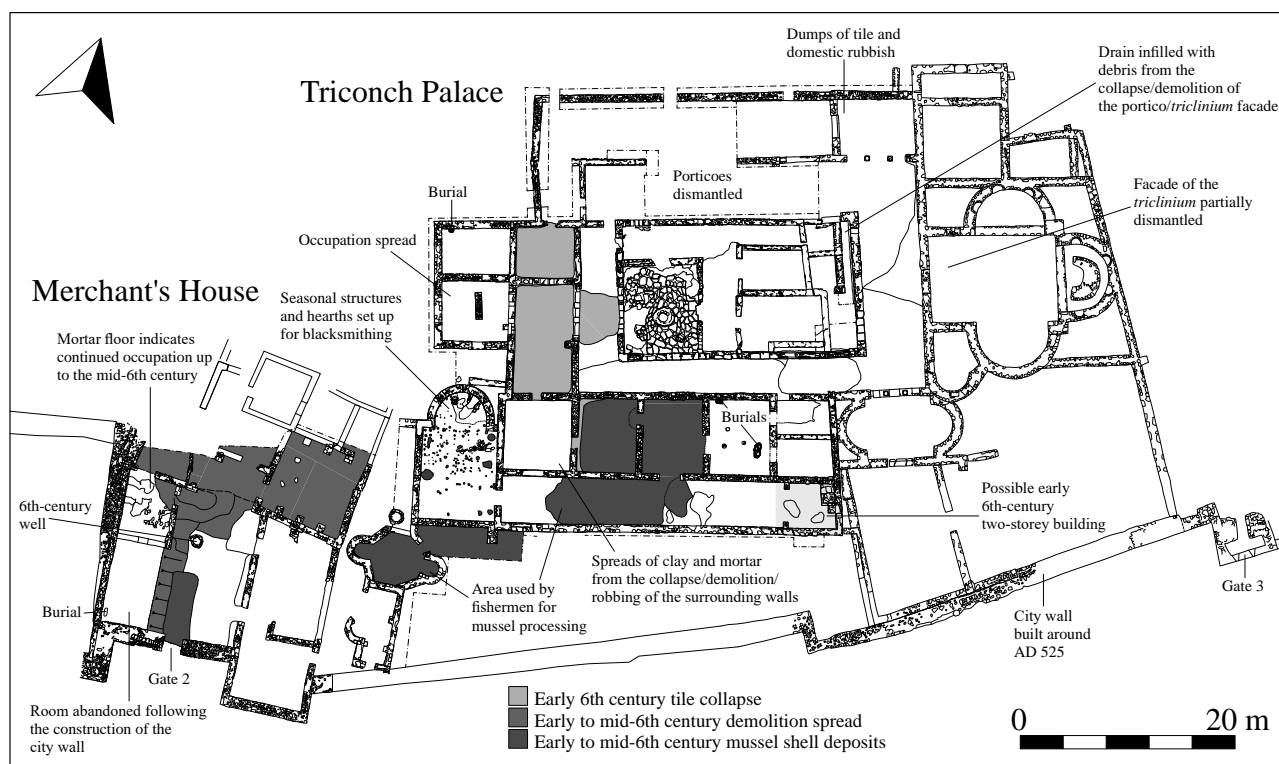


Figure 13.14. Interpretative plan of the Triconch Palace and Merchant's House in the 6th century

Aegean and Crete.³⁷ The coin finds essentially affirm this picture; apart from silver radiates in the mid-3rd century, all the imperial coins are of base metal, struck at Rome. Explaining this is not straightforward: for example, was the port in a zone where the Imperial authorities paid their debts mainly in base metal? But from the late 3rd century, the debased silver radiate became the only denomination

to occur in this villa, the denarius and the less-valuable base-metal denominations presumably becoming obsolete. The assemblage shows that there was also an increase in the number of mints issuing Imperial coins in this period. Although Rome provides almost half of the coins, three come from the nearby mint of Siscia, Croatia and three from eastern mints (Heraclea, Cyzicus and an uncertain

one). By the 4th century, the tributary and social bonds with Rome were loosening and clearly changing at Butrint, as they were all over Greece. Significantly, there are no recorded coins from Rome at this time. The Balkan and Marmara mints of Siscia, Thessalonica, Constantinople and Cyzicus provide the bulk of the coins, although a few pieces come from Western mints at Arles and Ticinum and a few from eastern mints at Antioch and Alexandria. In short, as the Mediterranean began to embrace comprehensive economic change in the 3rd century, the villa at the Vrina Plain bridgehead engaged with a wide range of suppliers and influences.

The next major phase in the history of this villa, following a violent seismic episode that led to a rising water table, is as intriguing here as it was at the Triconch Palace. By the early 6th century the great houses of the late 4th century alongside the Vivari Channel had disappeared. In terms of display, of course, the erection of the town fortification wall in the early 6th century separated those inside Butrint from the waterfront, and certainly consigned the Vrina Plain settlement to being an extra-mural community. Did this prospect of extra-mural status bring about an effective end to the life of the Vrina villa, encouraging its owners to give the property to the Church? Certainly, the demise of these magnate dwellings coincided with the increasing importance of the Church as a social force at Butrint, as in all the southern Adriatic region towns at this time. It is as though the bishops of this and contiguous regions encouraged competition amongst their communities to build churches, drawing resources from an increasingly fragile socio-economic matrix.

The christianisation of Butrint as an urban centre was not exceptional. Numerous churches mark the small fortified port of *Onchesmos*, and a single but substantial basilica was erected within the shell of the Hellenistic and Roman city of Phoenice. But the signature ecclesiastical monument in this sub-region was undoubtedly the metropolitan sanctuary of the Forty Saints above *Onchesmos*, with its many baptismal basins and a pool. This was unequivocally a monastery that endured as a sanctuary into modern times, with its origins also in the early 6th century.

In this new era of competitive consumption, was the Vrina Plain villa at the bridgehead entrance to Butrint transformed into a monastery, a smaller version of the Forty Saints? Associated with the basilica was a small bath-house as well as many small, undistinguished reused buildings which yielded a modest material culture comprising prominent quantities of ceramics and glass with an eastern Mediterranean origin. Coinage, though, was rare, as it was at Diaporit and in Butrint; those few coins emanating, as at Butrint, from eastern mints. In contrast, nearly 800 late Roman coins have reportedly been found at Santa Quaranta,³⁸ offerings, we may surmise, associated with the sanctuary's presumed healing powers. In this respect, the Vrina Plain complex bears a stronger resemblance to properties at Butrint, except that the morphology of those within the walls of Butrint was changing. At exactly this

time the major houses on the north side of the channel appear to have been sub-divided into many smaller urban properties serving a variety of functional uses (Fig. 13.14).³⁹ Given its unique status as a villa that was made into a church without any occupation hiatus, it is tempting to see the new 6th-century complex as special, perhaps a monastery.

Domestic settings play an important role in the early history of monasticism. Augustine spent his formative Cassiciacum retreat in a friend's villa; Paulinus of Nola made the decision to renounce his senatorial fortune while living on his wife's Spanish estates. Similarly, Sulpicius Severus, Martin of Tours and Benedict of Nursia all supposedly founded early monasteries in houses or villas.⁴⁰ Houses, it would seem, played a formative role in the making of early ascetic communities. Indeed, general histories of Western monasticism often trace its origins – its cloister-based architecture, its combination of labour and contemplation, and its beginnings among the Roman élite – to the late Roman house and villa. The house-to-monastery model, however, has proved resilient, not least because it would appear to have some archaeological evidence to support it.⁴¹ The frequent discovery of house and villa remains beneath or near medieval monasteries seemed to provide material proof of a villa to monastery evolution. John Percival was the first to inject a note of caution into this confident narrative, pointing out that at least for Gaul, all of the proposed villa-monasteries showed a certain discontinuity of occupation between villa and church, sometimes by as much as several centuries.⁴² If a monastic church was simply built over a defunct villa or reused its ruined remains, the reasons for the palimpsest were legion: the reuse of land which ruins rendered unsuitable for agriculture; the association of ruins with sanctity in the early medieval imagination; or simply coincidence. But none of the proposed sites provides unambiguous, or even moderately convincing evidence for monastic occupation of a Roman house or villa. In many cases, the synchronous occupation of house/villa and church is unclear, in others, the Late Antique date of the church and/or site is unclear, and in every case the justification for specifically monastic or ascetic occupation is problematic.

So what might be the archaeological criteria for early monasticism? Reading the texts, it is not even certain that ascetic communities required a church with archaeologically visible liturgical equipment. Only the exceptionally large number of coins at the apparent monastery at Santa Quaranta – presumably offerings – offer any apparent archaeological index of a monastic context. Similarly, it is not clear that monks all lived in equitable accommodation; indeed, one gets the sense from Augustine's rules and Paulinus' poems that the hierarchies and wealth inequalities of the material world were still expressed. Moreover, did such communities in the 6th century require enclosure walls or other devices to separate them from the world? Even gender-separation appears to have been a goal, not a prerequisite, of being a monastery. In sum, there is no sense of any rules at this time that may

be detected in the archaeological record, in contrast, for example, to those that existed from the later 8th century onwards.

Of course, the material evidence, typically a Late Antique church exhibiting some relationship with a Late Antique residence, as in this case, and similarly at the nearby private villa-church (Diaporit), cannot be ignored. But in short, archaeology, even in combination with textual evidence, has yet to document a particular tie between houses and monasteries, or an evolution from house to monastery. The archaeology of these sites plays virtually no role in their monastic identification since in almost every known case, alternative functional identifications based on the archaeology are possible, and are often voiced. In a way, as Bowes claims correctly:

the coarse tools of archaeology are to blame, especially the non-correspondence between form and site function reflects a real “democratisation” of material culture in the late antique West, particularly after the mid-5th century and particularly in the domestic sphere, in which distinctions of wealth, class, social and familial structure increasingly lacked specific material footprints.⁴³

In respect of the Vrina Plain complex then, the only certainty one can state is of a major dwelling being partly re-purposed as a church at the beginning of the 6th century, followed by its effective demise within a maximum arc of forty to fifty years as Justinian’s legions struggled to reorder the provinces.

In this Christianised landscape, separating the Church from the secular is perhaps being too simplistic, but the emphasis upon the sacred may equally explain, as the wider resources were drained away, why Butrint experienced such a sudden decline. Of course, just about every other Epirote city experienced the same sudden downturn in its fortunes, as did the ports, for example, of the regions either side of the Adriatic Sea to the north. As it stands, the end of the Roman settlement on the Vrina Plain remains a mystery. Was the settlement deserted over a decade or two in an economic crisis, or did it experience some further event that caused its community to move away? Traces of intense burning in the basilica inevitably invite the interpretation that it perished during some Slavic raid in the later 6th century. Certainly, the coins and ceramics peter out after the mid-6th century – unlike the central parts, the forum in particular, inside Butrint (and also at the monastery of Santa Quaranta). The so-called pilgrimage centre at Diaporit seems to have been abandoned at much the same time, as were parts of the old Triconch Palace area. Thus a more likely explanation for the desertion or near-desertion of the erstwhile suburb is that the port was failing as Mediterranean commerce significantly declined, and with it this close-knit community failed too. Other explanations, of course, cannot be ruled out, but what is clear here, as elsewhere in Butrint, is that the 7th century marked a line in the sand, after which the old suburb was reduced to a tiny fraction

of the community that had lived there at any time since the Augustan era.

Overall the archaeology of Butrint from the 3rd to the 6th century highlights not only a period of dynamic change, but also the need to grasp how new architectural vocabularies were the subject of experiment as Roman political controls changed and were mediated through the agency of provincial circumstances. The suburb of Butrint, no less than the old town, experienced this steady transformation, creating its own particular visual and architectural reality. Such a reality shaped, of course, not only a memory at Butrint of a larger urban fabric, but also of a place that in the 9th century was, for a short period when the old centre lay largely deserted, almost certainly defined as *Buthrotum* itself.

Notes

- 1 Alcock 1993, 220.
- 2 Bowes 2010, 98.
- 3 Bowden 2011a, 280.
- 4 See Bowden 2011a.
- 5 Zachos 2015, 131–5.
- 6 Bowden 2011a.
- 7 Cf. Bowden 2011a, 280.
- 8 Bowes 2010, 60.
- 9 Cf. Alcock 1993, 224.
- 10 Cf. Scott 2000, 106–7; Scott 2004, 41–4.
- 11 Bowes 2010, 31.
- 12 See Volume 6.2, Chapter 2.
- 13 Hodges *et al.* 2016; Pluciennik *et al.* 2004; Lefe 2006.
- 14 Cf. Bescoby 2013.
- 15 Cf. Kelly 2004.
- 16 Bowden 2011a; 2011b.
- 17 Bowes 2011.
- 18 Bowden 2011a; 2011b.
- 19 Bowden 2003.
- 20 Soustal 2004, 20.
- 21 Bowden 2007.
- 22 Cf. Ceka 2013, 447–50.
- 23 Mastrocinque 2014.
- 24 Hodges 2013; Molla 2013.
- 25 Cf. Bowden 2008.
- 26 Muçaj 2013; Muçaj *et al.* 2015.
- 27 Hodges and Mitchell 2014; Muçaj 2013; Muçaj *et al.* 2015.
- 28 Bowden and Përzhita 2004b.
- 29 Cf. Bowden 2011a.
- 30 Bowes 2010, 17.
- 31 Alcock 1993, 19–24.
- 32 Hodges *et al.* 2016.
- 33 Cf. Bowes 2010, 95.
- 34 Cf. Bowes 2010, 94.
- 35 Bowden *et al.* 2011, 25, fig. 2.26.
- 36 Alcock 1993, 219.
- 37 Cf. Reynolds 2011.
- 38 Muçaj *et al.* 2015.
- 39 Bowden 2011b.
- 40 Cf. Bowes 2010.
- 41 Cf. Bowes 2011.
- 42 Percival 1976.
- 43 Bowes 2011.

14 The aristocratic *oikos* on the Vrina Plain, Butrint c. AD 830–1200¹

Simon Greenslade and Richard Hodges

Introduction

This chapter reviews the archaeology of the 9th- to 10th-century central place on the Vrina Plain settlement and its medieval afterlife. The archaeology indicates that this was the homestead of the *archon* who was known to have been living at Butrint in AD 881. On the basis of the evidence found in the excavations, it would therefore appear that this central place was the home of a powerful individual(s), and belongs to the category of settlements described by Paul Magdalino in his ground-breaking review of the aristocratic *oikos*.²

Background

Perhaps the most remarkable discovery made by the Butrint

Foundation's project on the Vrina Plain was the Phases 11–12 Middle Byzantine nucleus. This comprised a major residential area, workshops, a cemetery and perhaps a chapel, associated with which were five lead seals, a silver *miliaresion* and 51 bronze *folles* spanning the period c. AD 820–1042. The latter would appear to indicate that this was an administrative centre, and in all probability the place from which the ancient centre of Butrint was governed between c. AD 825–975 (Fig. 14.1).

Why exactly the administrative centre of Butrint moved out of the old fortified urban nucleus in the 9th century and was relocated in the ruins of the erstwhile suburb remains a mystery (Fig. 14.2). The new situation was not a foundation that might be described as *ex novo* as was the case, for example, with many new trading towns located beyond the Roman walls of post-Roman northwest Europe.³ As we have seen, in this case there had been a Roman nucleus that formed an integral part of colonial Butrint rather than an appendage – a genuine suburb. After this there was a major Roman villa occupying the bridgehead location and then a successor settlement, the most conspicuous element of which was a basilica. In other words, this was not 'a non-place' in the sense that the emporia of northwest Europe, where trading was encouraged, evolved as non-places (with minimal textual descriptions), outside or close to places with defined administrative identities. But curiously the Vrina Plain church had been partially burnt, probably either in Late Antiquity or at the time c. AD 800 that the Middle Byzantine *kastron* was sacked in the Western Defences,⁴ so that in the second quarter of the 9th century when a new Middle Byzantine nucleus was established here, much, though perhaps not all, of the earlier church lay in ruins. Why, we must ask, was the acropolis of Butrint, or indeed another section of the old Roman town, eschewed at this time in favour of the unfortified location on the Vrina Plain?

Before focusing upon this key question let us briefly review the archaeology of this new, short-lived aristocratic administrative place that was an 'extra-mural' Butrint.

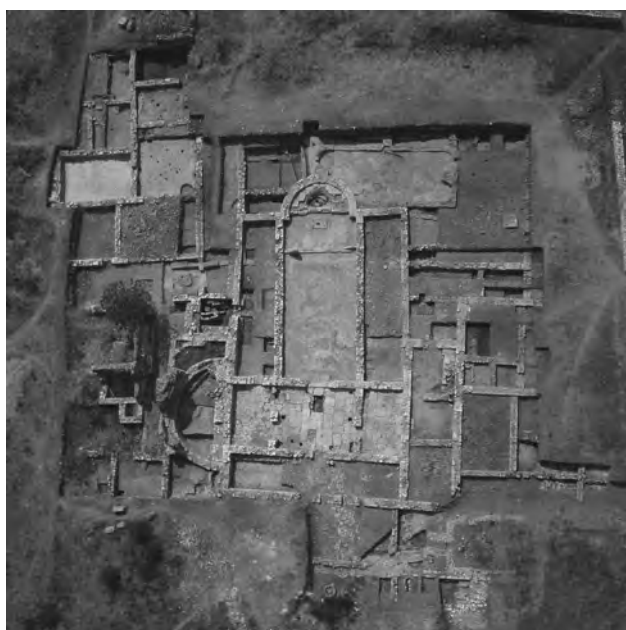


Figure 14.1. Aerial view of the 9th- to 10th-century Vrina Plain settlement

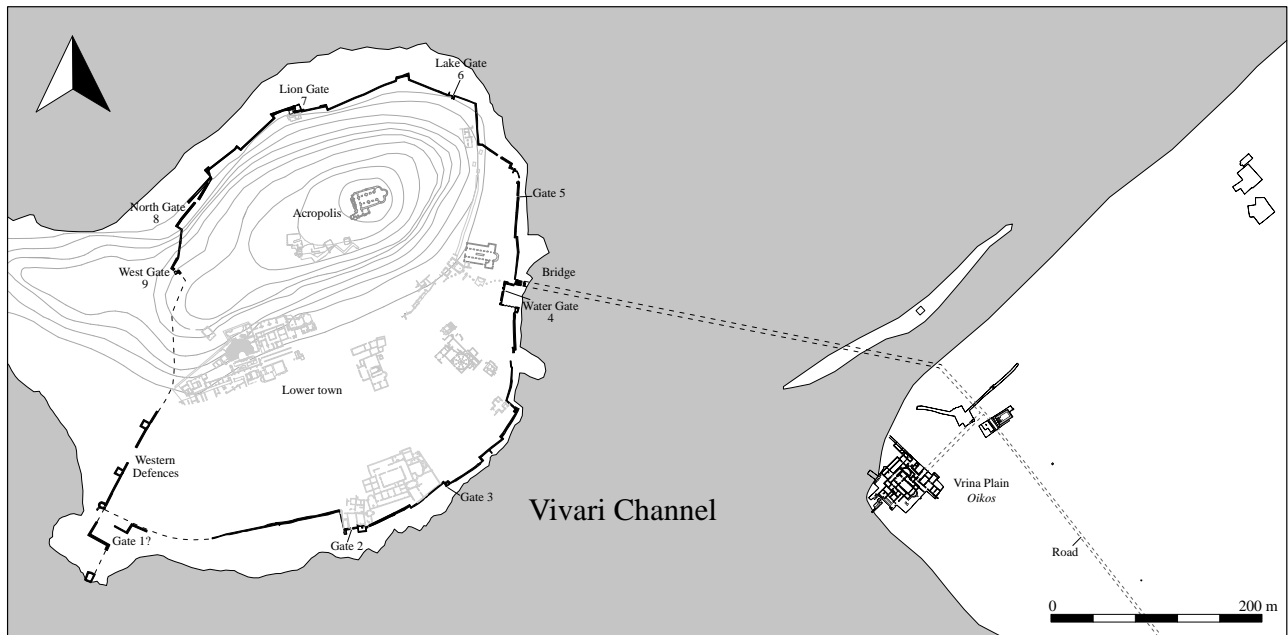


Figure 14.2. The topography of the Vrina Plain and Butrint in the 9th to 10th century AD

The archaeology of the aristocratic *oikos*

The aristocratic *oikos* was made within the well-preserved remains of the Late Antique ecclesiastical complex – a single-apsed church with associated buildings (Fig. 14.3). The archaeology was complex, given the nature of the reuse of an earlier building, part of which – the chancel – was almost certainly retained in use. Most of the associated deposits appear to be secondary, that is these post-date the abandonment of the aristocratic *oikos* (see below). However, the post-hole structures, the graves, and the evidence for the workshop are all primary features that attest to a settlement which, on the bases of the 51 coins and five seals, as well as decorated metalwork and ceramics, dates from at least the 820s to 960s AD. Radiocarbon dates support this, as we shall see in the case of the dated skeletal remains. The earliest date for the 9th-century settlement, however, must be treated with caution, as Byzantine coins were extremely uncommon in this region before the circulation of *folles* issued by Michael II (AD 820–29) during the 820s.⁵ It is possible that the church was occupied from the earlier 9th century, although the distinctive Avaro-Slavic ceramic wares dated to c. AD 800 found in the excavation of Towers 1 and 2 in the Western Defences of the *kastron* are notably absent.⁶ As for the occupation of the settlement after the 960s, this is not in doubt. However, the later phase of occupation was not characterised by the presence of either coins or seals. Indeed, the anonymous *folles* of Basil II (AD 976–1025) which are so common within the walled area of Butrint are almost absent on the Vrina Plain.⁷ The main elements of the settlement are detailed below.

The hall

The first-floor hall, the principal chamber of the new house,

measured 15.64×5.88 m internally and was located above the former narthex of the Late Antique basilica, the floor of which was partially supported by a series of large posts, fire-blasted through the underlying paving stones. The hall was accessed from the west where a further first-floor chamber, possibly a service room, was located.⁸ Measuring 13.23×3.76 m, this room ran along the western end of the earlier building. A staircase at the southern end of the room provided a means of access to the rooms below. Part of a large column of grey marble was placed at the northern end of the stair block to support the new staircase.

The ground-floor rooms below both chambers were reorganised at this time: the space beneath the central chamber was separated into three rooms with the construction of blocking walls built between the piers of the earlier building, while the space below the western chamber was also separated into three rooms with the construction of a partition wall at the northern end of the space. No evidence of the use of this ground floor for storage or animals was found. As part of these changes, the eastern apse of the earlier building was also floored over.

Access to the house remained via the triple doorway that had formed the main entrance of the earlier basilica. Directly opposite this, the door separating the exonarthex from the narthex was narrowed. This door led into the central room directly below the hall and was axially aligned with the main entrance into the nave of the earlier basilica. As a structure it is tempting to interpret the house as a pseudo-triclinium with first-floor residential accommodation and a ground-floor area for animals and storage, an architectural form that was common in this period in the Mediterranean.⁹ The two 8th-century towers of the Western Defences were in essence variants of this architectural arrangement, as was the relatively well-preserved Phase 9 (AD 550–75)

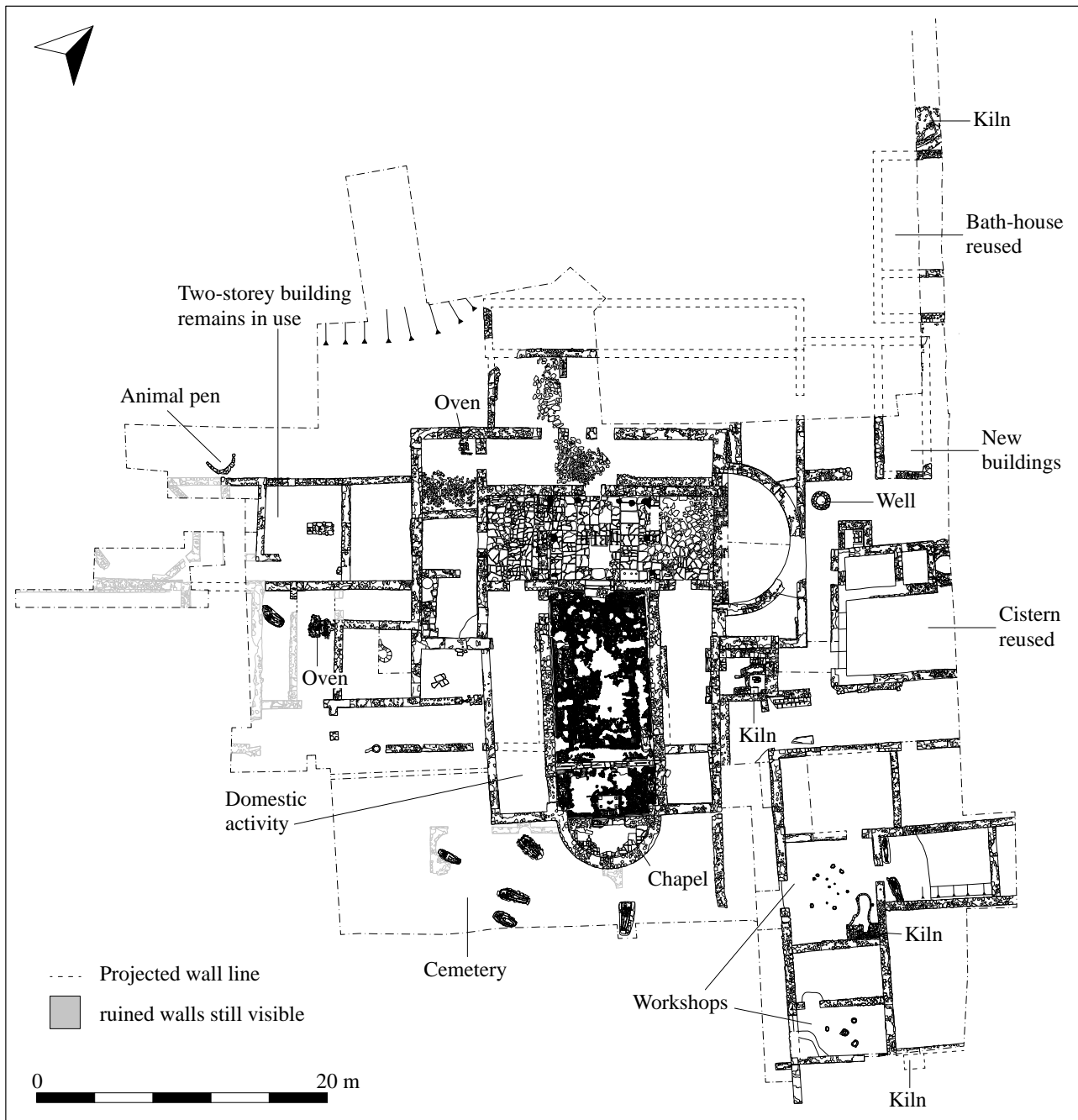


Figure 14.3. The 9th- to 10th-century Vrina Plain oikos

dwelling occupying Room 40 of the Merchant's House area, situated in a dog-leg in the fortifications beside the Vivari Channel.¹⁰ The same arrangement may also have been upheld in two further timber buildings dating perhaps from the 10th–11th century. One almost exactly followed the footprint of the earlier Phase 9 dwelling of Room 40 of the Merchant's House, while the other was a simpler building occupying the earlier ruins of the Triconch Palace, close by in Room 19. Both had timber frames, and traces of an external staircase clearly existed in the case of the building occupying Room 40, and may have existed for the building in Room 19.¹¹

The church and aisles

The religious nature of the former site seems to have remained, now apparently focused only on the nave and the sanctuary. Following its abandonment, the interior of the basilica was cleaned out and the superstructure repaired: the arcades, which had collapsed, were patched up and the openings between them were blocked-in. With the new side walls built, the nave and aisles were re-roofed; the floor mosaics in both the nave and sanctuary were uncovered and the step in front of the main north entrance into the nave was extended over the mosaic. A new altar was dedicated within the sanctuary, supported by a pinkish-white marble

column placed centrally over the foundation stone of the earlier altar, and due to an enduring weakness in the area of the sanctuary, the original chancel screen was replaced by a more robust barrier made out of a mix of large stone blocks, scavenged from the surrounding ruinous buildings, to form a diaphragm-wall to support the roof. In sum, the church was reduced to the sanctuary, approached by way of the old nave, in the floor of which were interred several graves.

As a result of the blocking-in of the arcades, the aisles seem to have become more utilitarian. The original floors of these spaces were robbed and a rough tile floor surface laid in both. The role of the western aisle is unclear; no obvious indications of use were found, although two very well-preserved bronze chains were found lying on this floor at the southern end of the room. These seem to have been part of a steelyard balance mechanism. The eastern aisle became a workshop associated with a large pottery kiln which was built in the small room that opened off this aisle. The exact date of this Mid-Byzantine kiln has yet to be established.

Cemetery

Within the nave of the 5th-century basilica two burials were interred, the graves cut through the borders of the earlier mosaic pavement apparently following the border's alignment. The western burial, which had been marked by a footstone at its southern end, contained the body of a young male aged between 16 and 24. An ornamented bronze belt buckle and strap end were found above his pelvis.

A secondary cemetery, possibly for the community/retainers under the official's jurisdiction, was made in the area of the infilled Roman garden pools, with contemporary outlying burials also interred in both the eastern and western ranges of the earlier Roman buildings. Orientated east–west, the burials were stone-lined and capped. In one, a young female had been interred with bronze earrings in her ears and two silver earrings tied by cord around her neck. Radiocarbon dating has produced a date range of AD 870–1010 (1110 ± 40 BP) for this burial.¹² Another burial, this time of an adult male found on the base of the outer pool of the fountain to the south of the apse, was radiocarbon-dated to AD 770–980 (1170 ± 40 BP);¹³ the man was apparently buried with a coin of Leo VI (AD 886–912).

Apart from the individual buried with the coin, who is thought to have been aged about 40–50 at the time of his death, all the other individuals appear to have been fairly young when they died. These individuals all display early signs of arthritis indicative of performing hard physical labour from an early age. Four of the individuals, moreover, showed traces of having suffered from scurvy, while indications of anaemia in a number of the skeletons suggest periods of endemic malaria.

Clearly not all the occupants of the household were identified in the excavations; nevertheless, in both size

and grave-form the small cemeteries resemble those of the 11th century found within Butrint at the Triconch Palace excavations,¹⁴ as well as those in the small graveyard of the church by the ancient well of Junia Rufina.¹⁵

Ancillary buildings

Many of the walls of the earlier buildings associated with the earlier *domus* and subsequent basilica remained standing at this time. Although in various states of repair, there are indications that some of the rooms were reoccupied.

To the east, small workshops with associated kilns appear to have been set up in some of the dilapidated rooms of the eastern wing of the earlier Roman *domus*, the walls of which are thought to have remained standing almost to roof height. The original doorways of the two southern rooms exposed remained accessible from the area to the west and it may be that these identify two separate dwellings: the northern room had a kiln in the southeastern corner and doorways in its eastern and northern walls; the eastern space beyond was possibly an open space as two burials were interred within it. The southern room had doors in its northern and southern walls.

Further industrial activity was found within the area of the eastern bath-house of the *domus*. Abandoned by the mid-4th century, the building was reused at this time following the construction of a large kiln in the northern room of the building. This location may have been chosen due to the proximity of the Vivari Channel, with water needed as a component of the new industry practised in this room. A new building and associated well were also built at this time just to the south of the bath-house. The stone used to build this structure was quarried from the surrounding dilapidated buildings, as indicated by a piece of Pentelic marble presumably sourced from the Temple mausoleum.

Defences?

All the archaeological evidence suggests this settlement was unfortified. The geophysical survey produced no evidence of defences beyond the limits of the excavations. Furthermore, no traces of any fortifications were found in the excavations. This is all the more remarkable given the apparent sack of the late 8th-century towers in the Western Defences, and the history of civil unrest in the southern Balkans during the earlier 9th century.¹⁶ Nevertheless, in an apparent break with the immediate past, a location outside the fortifications raised in the early 6th century was considered secure. The end of the household, however, appears to coincide with a return to the fortified urban settlement when the walls were extensively refurbished in the later 10th or early 11th century.¹⁷

Connections

Whether the bridge to Butrint still existed at this time is not known, but the 6th-century city wall seems to have

respected the bridge, the wall having been built against the sides of the bridge leaving an opening between them. As this opening was only blocked when a boundary wall around the Great Basilica was constructed across the gap in the 11th century, it would seem to suggest the bridge remained accessible up to this point.¹⁸ The eastern roadway, which had originally connected the Roman bridgehead to points to the east of Butrint, also probably remained in use during this period (see Chapter 8). At this time the road possessed low banks on either side of it, presenting an aspect of a small hollow-way.

Material culture and economy

The material culture is very different from the later 8th-century finds from the excavations of the Western Defences of Butrint.¹⁹ In the Western Defences, the material culture comprised a mixture of East Mediterranean and Apulian imports beside local wares and locally made glassware.²⁰ Bulk goods in the form of large numbers of amphorae appeared to be absent. Instead, the finds resembled the mixed cargoes of several occasional ships. Put another way, Butrint as located in the Western Defences was a centre of consumption, with only limited evidence of either production or involvement in the commerce of significant cargoes. The Vrina Plain settlement, by contrast, produced evidence of administration in the form of seals and plentiful coins (predominantly minted at Syracuse), as well as ceramic production; almost fifty per cent of the pottery – mainly small globular amphorae – was imported from Byzantine southern Italy, chiefly the Apulian port of Otranto. These remains suggest a marked switch of emphasis towards managed production and Ionian Sea (southern Adriatic) commerce. The seals, in particular, also indicate that this was a central place, effectively adopting the regional status and management of (the largely deserted) Butrint during this period.

In the light of the numismatic evidence, such material culture is hardly a surprise. Ever since Morrisson identified the importance of Sicily's Syracuse mint during the 9th century (before the island was lost by the Byzantines to the Aghlabids), there has been growing evidence of a major nexus of western Byzantine trade encompassing the region between the western Balkans, southern Italy, Malta and eastern Sicily.²¹ It now appears from the numismatic evidence that this Sicilian-managed trading network also reached up to certain ports on the Tyrrhenian coast as far north as Luni in Liguria²² and involved Malta on a significant scale.²³ The Tyrrhenian numismatic data suggest that the trade was transacted through partnerships directed towards specific central places and their administrators and was not ubiquitous to all coastal sites in this region.²⁴ Probably the same was true for the western Balkans where Sicilian coins of the 9th century dominate the coin assemblages as far south as Corinth.²⁵

The few pieces of high-status metalwork of 10th-century date found in the excavations, including the ornate buckle-

plate from the grave along the western side of the nave and a buckle with a plate formed of twin stems with pearled heart-shaped terminals from a room of the old *domus* immediately to the west of the nave of the basilica, would appear to be of local manufacture. A close parallel for the openwork buckle from the grave has been found in a burial at Palaeokastritsa on Corfu.²⁶ There is no clear reason to think that these were not the products of metalsmiths working in the region, possibly even at Butrint itself.

By comparison with these far-reaching connections, the livestock economy indicates a distinctly local mixed regime, with half the bones being those of caprines and a quarter of pig; cattle make up about 15 percent. The medieval period, it seems, did not bring about radical changes in the livestock economy of the site, although the importance of caprines increased substantially. A higher proportion of neonatal remains suggests that most livestock was locally husbanded. In addition, relatively well-balanced element representation, including a substantial number of loose teeth and phalanges, shows that animals were retained and processed on site. Taxa other than the main domesticates would have made only a small contribution to the diet, although domestic fowl were considerably more frequent in the medieval assemblage. Overall the percentages resemble very closely those from the small seigneurial settlement excavated on the other side of the Adriatic Sea, at Santa Maria in Civita (Molise) (Plate 14.1).²⁷

Discussion

The first-floor dwelling with associated high-status burials dates to the mid-9th to mid-10th century. The material culture shows a steady revival of trade with the heel of Italy while the ornamental metal fittings and jewellery points to local Balkan connections including, perhaps, Corfu. The coins and seals confirm the Byzantine administrative role of this household. Certainly, the material culture and art distinguishes the household from anything yet found in the large excavations within the walled town of Butrint at this time, including the towers of the Western Defences. Little is known from any written sources about Butrint as a town at this time. Arsenios of Corfu (AD 876–953), who apparently visited Epirus to plead with Slav pirates to desist their raids, recorded that Butrint was rich in fish and oysters (see Volume 6.2, Chapter 10), with a fertile hinterland.²⁸ Were these simple local products the basis of Butrint's revival as an Adriatic seaport? The evidence to answer this question did not survive, so instead we must reflect upon other issues to explain the significance of this settlement.

An aristocratic central place

The five seals, as well as the large number of coins, show that this was a political centre – a Byzantine administrative centre. This household was, in all likelihood, the homestead

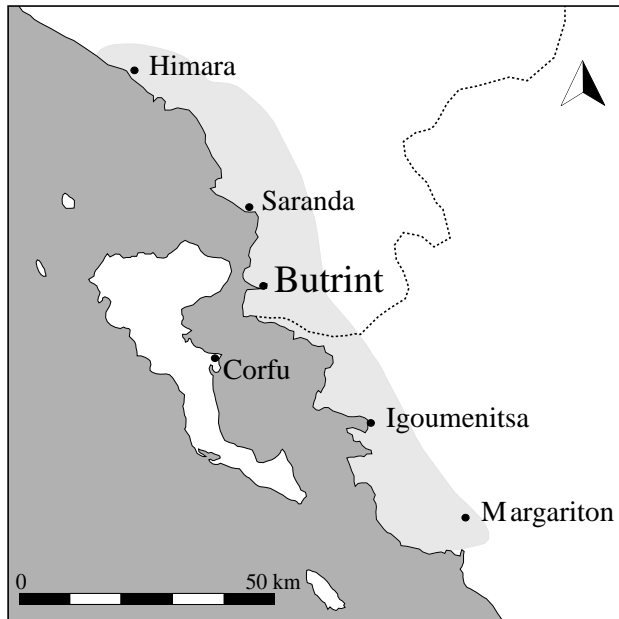


Figure 14.4. Map showing a hypothetical province of Vagenetia (after Chrysos 1997)

of an official – conceivably an *archon*, the ruler of a region, as we have mentioned – who attended to imperial business on this far western frontier of the empire. The *archon*, we may assume, was an imperial official managing a province whose population occupied various parts of the ruined ancient town of Butrint as well as the surrounding coastal littoral.

Was this, then, the residence of the *archon* of Vagenetia, the region opposite Corfu,²⁹ whose seal has been discovered in excavations in Silistra, Bulgaria?³⁰ The seal describes this individual as an imperial *spatharios*.³¹ If so, we should assume this individual managed at least ‘all the western part of Epirus opposite Kerkyra, from around Cheimara [modern Himara] to the north and as far south as Margariton [close to Pargal]’ (Fig. 14.4).³² This coastal region included, of course, the port of Saranda and thus the great 5th–6th-century shrine of Santa Quaranta above it almost certainly lay within his territory.³³ Indeed, was this the household at Butrint (*polis epineios*) in which, according to the *Vita Eliae iunioris*, St. Elias the Younger and his companion, Daniel, were held prisoner in AD 881–82, on suspicion of being Arab spies, on their return from visiting shrines in the Peloponnese?³⁴

As noted above, a young man, aged about 16–24, was interred with a decorated belt buckle in the nave of the old church. Was this, we must ask, the imperial *archon* himself or a member of his immediate close family? And what of the older individual buried with the coin? Although he showed signs of arthritis, his ailment was less serious than that of the other individuals represented, suggesting a different lifestyle. Considering his age, better health and apparent distinction in burial rites, it is possible that this man had a closer connection to the presiding household and that rather than being a tenant he may have been part of the official’s family.

Apart from the seals, coins and fine metalwork, the presence of the remains of eight bears in the Vrina bone assemblage is worth noting (see Volume 6.2, Chapter 9). Bear remains are rare from other sites in Butrint and it may be that the Vrina bears had been kept as high-status pets or curios, or had been hunted for their meat and skins. Alternatively they may not have been local to the area and their presence could indicate traded furs. As in the Roman assemblage, traded furs may be responsible for some of the remains, since four of the eight medieval specimens were metapodials, elements of the extremities that frequently remain attached to traded skins. However, the other four elements were long bones (three tibiae and a humerus), providing strong evidence that live animals were present in the local area. One noteworthy feature on a distal bear tibia was osteophyte development on the lateral margin of the distal epiphysis. This reactive bone growth, though not pronounced, is a skeletal abnormality relating to osteoarthritis, suggesting this particular bear lived to an old age.

The location

Why was the Vrina Plain reoccupied by a significant Byzantine administrative household in the 9th century? The household was neither grand nor large.³⁵ Occupying an abandoned church and its attendant buildings that had been partially burnt down, the household at its zenith appears to have comprised a small first-floor hall in the earlier narthex as well as workshops and storage rooms. The chancel of the earlier church was possibly maintained as a small chapel or at least as a funerary oratory.

Was this choice of location determined by the conjunction of easier access to the inland region by way of the old Roman road, by this time a hollow-way, leading from the (Roman-period) bridge inland, with an equally accessible point for landing, processing and selling fish from Lake Butrint? Clearly, the community amounted to little more than a single household involved in these mixed economic activities, albeit one with a distinctive material culture (Fig. 14.5). In other words, there was no urban character to this revival of occupation, nor any evidence of an urban revival within the walls of Butrint itself.³⁶ It was not, then, a miniature version of an administrative urban centre such as Amorium in Turkey or Thessaloniki in Greece. Nor was this an emporium like Comacchio, at the mouth of the River Po at the head of the Adriatic Sea.³⁷ Yet, judging from the seals and many coins, it was a place involved in administration and was probably responsible for managing tolls and customs on behalf of the empire, which, we might surmise, was why St. Elias came here in AD 881. As such, it was a central place, one tier down in the settlement hierarchy from the major administrative centres like Amorium and Thessaloniki, and possibly more significant than beaching-places for small-scale mixed cargos (cabotage), such as Saranda, at this time.³⁸ In sum, this was implicitly an administrative settlement, very

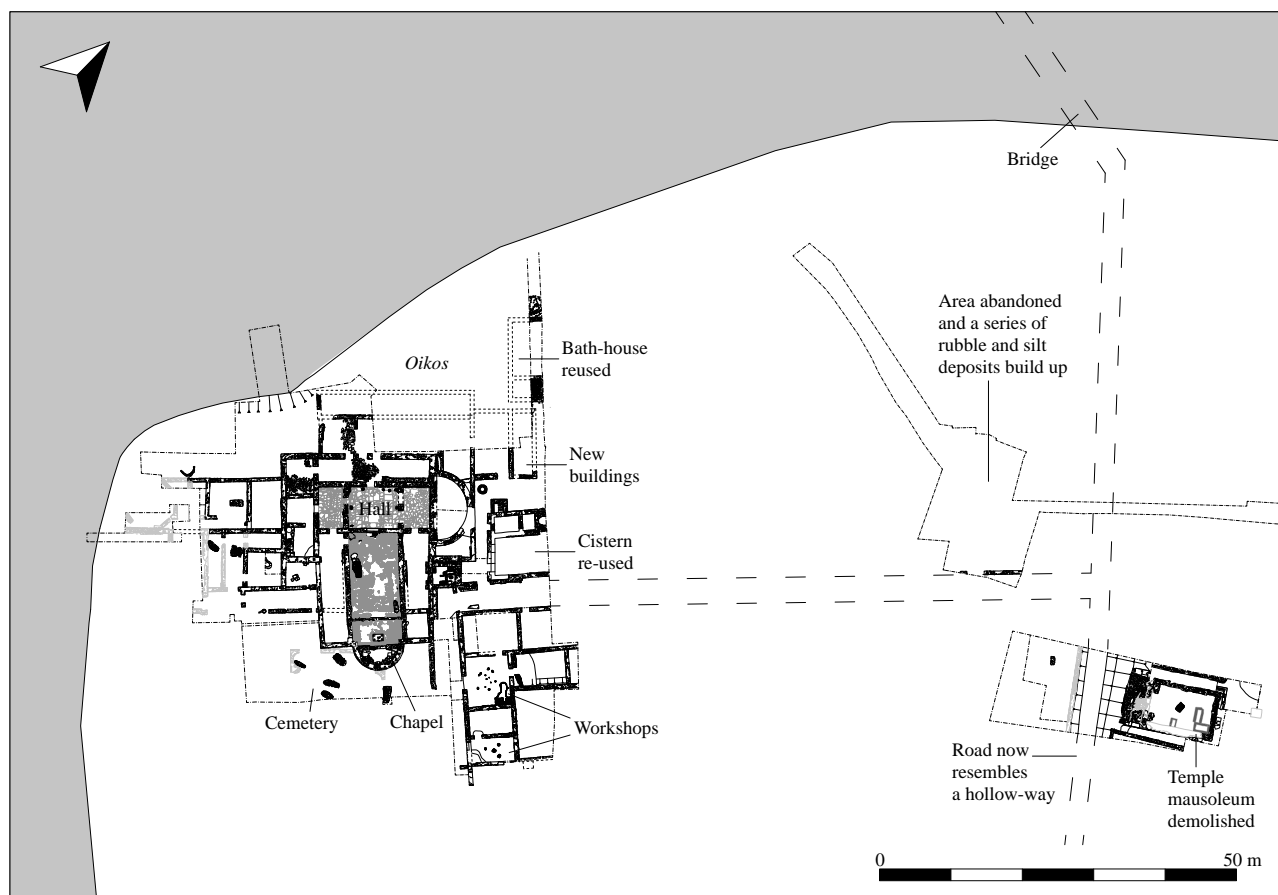


Figure 14.5. The Vrina Plain in Phase 11 (9th–10th century AD)

different, for example, from the small, élite central places identified by Loveluck and Tys around the North Sea at this time.³⁹

In other words, the Vrina Plain mid-Byzantine settlement was probably not a response to the sack of Butrint, but instead an administrative initiative to participate in an important trading zone, pivoted on Sicily. For sixty or more years this zone meshed together eastern Sicilian, southern Italian and western Balkan commercial interests in a fairly low level of bulk trade. At a time when Venice was attempting to establish itself as the primary force in the northern Adriatic Sea, and as the Aghlabids were venturing to manage coastal trade in North Africa, this new trading zone was unlikely to have been exceptional. It occurred too at a time when there was a sharp rise in pilgrimage from Latin Christendom to the Holy Land,⁴⁰ and a concomitant traffic of pilgrims to the Peloponnesian shrines that led ultimately to St. Elias' presence at Butrint.⁴¹ It was at this time too, we speculate, that the shrine at Santa Quaranta above Saranda may have been restored,⁴² lending status possibly to the commander of the region in which it lay, namely the putative *archon* on the Vrina Plain. The hidden economic implications of this pilgrimage and the significance of Santa Quaranta must surely have raised the profile of Butrint and its imperial administrator at this time.

The final phase

The final phase of the Vrina Plain community is puzzling. It appears that the water table was steadily rising, making occupation of the plain difficult after c. 1200.⁴³ Colluvium created by increased agricultural activity on the hills around the plain may be one reason for these changing environmental conditions. Similar circumstances were also found to have been occurring around the lagoon at Glyki, some 100 km south of Butrint.⁴⁴ The abandonment of the Vrina Plain house may also have coincided with the collapse of the Roman bridge over the Vivari Channel. Certainly the construction of part of the town's new defensive circuit over the road at the bridgehead by the Great Basilica suggests this was no longer an important access route into the city. The silting up of the hollow-way by the Temple mausoleum would appear to confirm this, as up to this point that route is thought to have continued to be the main access way connecting Butrint with the valley beyond (see Chapter 8). With the disappearance of both the *oikos* and the bridge, this southern route-way soon became forgotten.

The administrative household almost certainly abandoned the plain for the walled town either shortly before or after AD 1000 (Fig. 14.6).⁴⁵ Following this, much of the superstructure of the 9th/10th-century building appears to have collapsed and any usable material was removed,

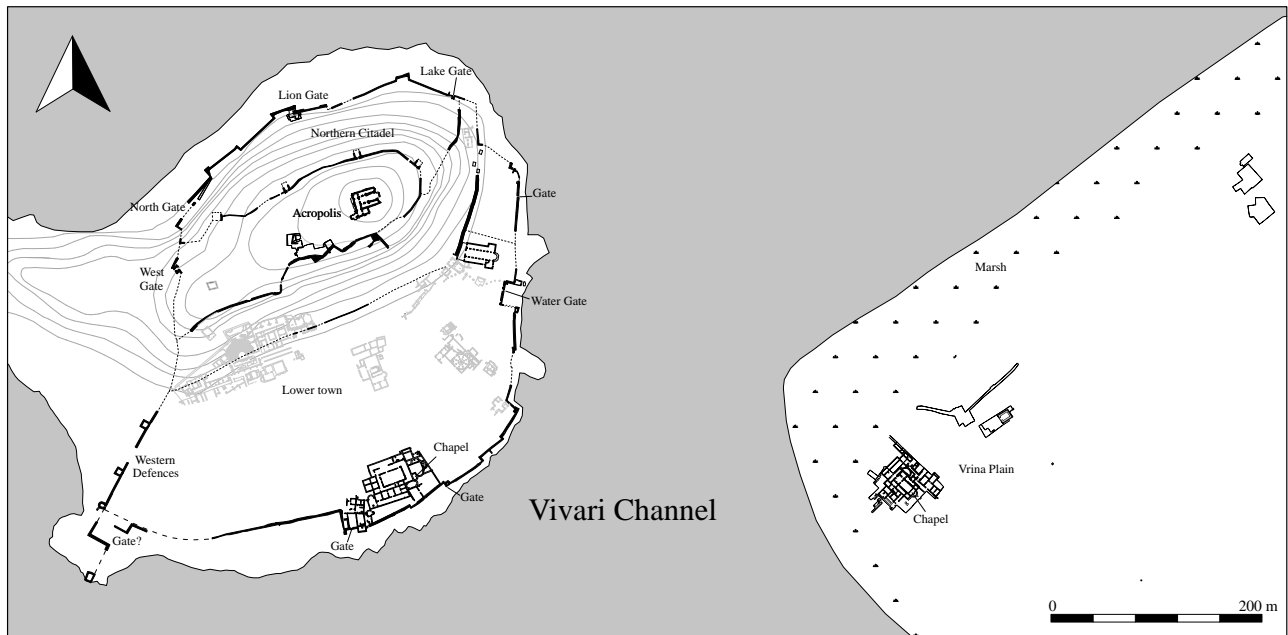


Figure 14.6. The topography of the Vrina Plain and Butrint in the 11th century AD

presumably to be reused in the construction of the new fortifications enclosing Butrint at this time.⁴⁶

Despite this robbing, there are indications that two kilns, one of which seems to have been a pottery kiln, were built in the apse of the earlier *domus*. The eastern end of the basilica also remained a focal point from the 11th to 12th century, with a devotional element centred on the extant apse of the earlier building. Whether this functioned as a family church or as a periodically used shrine could not be determined. Cut through the deposit infilling the sanctuary were the burials of three children, two neonates and one aged 7–9 years old. To the west of the basilica the remains of a post-built structure were found cut through the black soils. Similar post-built structures characterised the community living beside the Vivari Channel in the Triconch Palace area at this time,⁴⁷ and it is perhaps worth noting that similar insubstantial buildings, normally with walls of reeds, clay and daub, and roofs of reeds, existed until the modern era, as Luigi Maria Ugolini observed in the inter-war period.⁴⁸ These modest buildings presumably served families which practised fishing or otherwise worked the plain at this time.

The devotional use of the southern apse appears to have been short-lived. The reason is unclear, although the central step into the apse is severely fire-cracked and a fire in this central space may once more have caused the abandonment of the area. Subsequently the central feature in the apse was removed and an attempt appears to have been made to remove the stone slabs flooring the apse too. This was followed soon after by the collapse of the apse wall. Fragments of a Brown and Green Painted Ware bowl dated to the second half of the 12th century were found lying on the flagstones of the apse directly below the apse collapse, providing a *terminus post quem* for this occurrence.

Despoiling of the church's focal point within the apse also occurred at the nearby church at Diaporit on the shore of Lake Butrint, where the principal inhumations in its apse were removed.⁴⁹ Were these skeletal remains from local churches translated as relics to shrines inside Butrint as the port-town expanded during the era of the Epirote Despots, or were the relics from the Vrina Plain translated to the adjacent hilltop, modern Shën Dëlli, where intriguingly a later medieval church dedicated to St. Elias exists to this day?

With the final abandonment, a 'black earth' deposit built up over the remains. This post-abandonment deposit, varying in depth from c. 0.35 m to 0.60 m, contained a mixed ceramic assemblage including early, mid- and late Roman material, as well as ceramics covering the period from the 9th to the 13th century. The coin finds cover a similar wide range; among the latest coins are three of Manuel Comnenus I (AD 1143–80). A fragment of a silver-plated horse bit, thought to date to the late 8th century, was also recovered from this layer. Some 400 m to the east of the excavation, a similar 'black earth' deposit has been found in a recent excavation undertaken by the Albanian Heritage Foundation as part of their summer training school.⁵⁰ The finds from this include a bronze pectoral reliquary cross engraved with a figure of the Virgin Mary as Mother of God (Fig. 14.7). Amongst the medieval ceramics recovered from these layers has been a quantity of distinctive Byzantine *sgraffito*-ware sherds, tell-tale vessels of the later 11th to early 13th century, a time when Butrint formed strong commercial connections with the Peloponnese which rivalled and even eclipsed its older mercantile reach to southern Italy.⁵¹ This rich assemblage suggests at least the presence of a church close-by, or possibly a residence of some kind. Fewer such sherds occurred around the basilica



Figure 14.7. Frontal view of a small bronze pectoral reliquary cross of Byzantine type, engraved with the figure of the Virgin Mary as Mother of God, her arms raised in a gesture of intercession (11th century) (photo Valbona Hysa)

within the old aristocratic settlement, suggesting that these prized tablewares belonged to a household probably engaged principally in fishing and, judging by the black earth accumulated from human and animal occupation, herding on the plain.

Even with much of the building covered over, there are signs that the ruins were still used periodically and remained a focus for the local community, as indicated by six graves dating to the 12th to 13th century. These were simple graves: only one (3308) was stone-lined, as had been the norm in the previous centuries; the rest deployed reused tiles. None of these inhumations was accompanied by grave goods.

From this time onwards, apart from a few Venetian stray finds the site appears to have been largely deserted. The cause of this may have been that attempts at supporting an expanding town from the mid-11th century by agricultural intensification caused an ecological change to the surrounding environment and saw the emergence of swamp and wetlands along the edges of the plain.⁵²

As a result, only shepherds and fishermen populated this increasingly marshy terrain until the landscape was drained in the 1960s to facilitate agricultural investment in root crops and wheat.

Conclusion

In a recent essay Veikou contends that a binary urban-rural settlement system did not exist in the 7th to 12th centuries in Epirus.⁵³ Such terms as ‘city’, ‘town’, ‘village’ and ‘countryside’, which have clear-cut contemporary meanings, do not adequately describe Middle Byzantine historical settlements. Instead, there were settlement types ‘which combine qualities of more than one distinct type’.⁵⁴ Veikou refers to these as ‘in-between settlements’, in many respects outside the present historical terminology for the regional settlement structure. Veikou’s concern is primarily with variants of villages, as opposed to administrative centres, and she admits that the archaeological evidence is almost non-existent to test her concept. Now, however,

like the spectrum of rural settlement described from the textual sources by Veikou from this era (the ‘in-between settlements’), the newly discovered central place on the Vrina Plain does not strictly conform to any known historical form. It is neither urban nor rural, occupying the extra-mural ruins of an older established urban community.

More significantly, this aristocratic *oikos* is different from those few places described in the texts of the era.⁵⁵ The 11th-century aristocrat, Philokales, converted his village into his private estate: ‘it is reasonable to suppose that the “fine house” at its simplest corresponded to the domanial residence – the “manor house”, which formed the nucleus of every *oikoproasteion*’.⁵⁶ Such an 11th-century manor-house is described from western Turkey belonging to a certain Baris: ‘it consisted of a domed church, a domed cruciform hall (*triklinos*), with four chambers (*kouboukleia*) opening off of it, and a bath-house (*loutron*). From one point of view, this was a very modest residence even by provincial standards.’⁵⁷ By the standards discovered on the Vrina Plain, which might well have comprised all these elements, Baris’ central place was far from modest. Neither can be compared with the country house of Constantine Doukas at Pentegostis, near Serres, which had ‘quarters adequate for receiving the emperor’: this meant quarters for accommodating the imperial household, besides the combination of chapel, hall, chambers and bath-house for the residents and their esteemed guests.⁵⁸ No emperor ever came or was probably anticipated at Butrint. Nevertheless, being the possible home of an *archon*, we might expect that there were amenities for housing guests, even suspect ones like St. Elias in AD 881. Just how modest these really were on the far frontier of the Byzantine Empire, even at a moment of sustained economic revival, is now evident from this discovery.

Notes

- 1 A version of this chapter was published as: ‘The aristocratic *oikos* on the Vrina Plain, Butrint, c. AD 830–1200’, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 37 (2013), 1–19.
- 2 Magdalino 1984.
- 3 Hodges 2000.
- 4 Hodges *et al.* 2009; Kamani 2011, 115–33.
- 5 Papadopoulou 2012, 297–320; Morrisson 2002, 954–8; Morrisson 1999, 307–34.
- 6 Hodges *et al.* 2009; Kamani 2011.
- 7 Hodges 2011a, 319–26.
- 8 Cf. Scranton 1957.
- 9 Polci 2003, 79–112.
- 10 Bowden, Cerova *et al.* 2011, 193–7.
- 11 Bowden, Culwick *et al.* 2011, 123–4; Bowden, Crowson *et al.* 2011, 209–12; Augenti 2008, 183–92.
- 12 Skeleton 3958 (Beta 260141).
- 13 Skeleton 3721 (Beta 260138).
- 14 Bowden and Hodges 2011.
- 15 Sebastiani 2008, 254–5.
- 16 Curta 2006, 134–47.
- 17 Bowden and Hodges 2011; Hodges 2008b; see Pennas 2005, 14–15.
- 18 Cf. Leppard 2013.
- 19 Hodges *et al.* 2009; Kamani 2011.
- 20 Vroom 2012, 353–93.
- 21 Morrisson 1999; McCormick 2001.
- 22 Rovelli 2012.
- 23 Bruno 2009, 189–92.
- 24 Rovelli 2012.
- 25 Morrisson 1999; Papadopoulou 2012.
- 26 Agallopoulou 1973, 423–4.
- 27 Hodges *et al.* 1980, 97–102.
- 28 Soustal 2004, 22.
- 29 Chrysos 1997, 184.
- 30 Hodges 2008b.
- 31 Chrysos 1997; Papadopoulou 2012.
- 32 Chrysos 1997, 184.
- 33 Gilkes, Hodges, Vroom, Kondo, forthcoming; Mitchell 2004a, 145–86.
- 34 Rossi Taibbi 1962.
- 35 Neville 2004.
- 36 Bowden and Hodges 2011; Bowden and Hodges 2012; Hodges 2008b.
- 37 Gelichi 2007, 77–104.
- 38 Gilkes, Hodges, Vroom and Kondo, forthcoming.
- 39 Loveluck and Tys 2006, 148.
- 40 McCormick 2011, 151–73.
- 41 Haldon 2005, 90–5.
- 42 Hodges and Mitchell 2014.
- 43 Bescoby *et al.* 2008, 2574–9.
- 44 Tartaron 2004; Wiseman and Zachos 2003.
- 45 Cf. Hodges 2016.
- 46 Molla, Paris and Venturini 2012.
- 47 Bowden and Hodges 2012.
- 48 Ugolini 1937.
- 49 Bowden and Pärzhita 2004b, 413–33.
- 50 Gilkes and Hysa 2011, 34–5.
- 51 Bowden and Hodges 2012, 91; cf. D’Amico 2012.
- 52 Bescoby *et al.* 2008, 2574–9.
- 53 Veikou 2009.
- 54 Veikou 2009, 43–54.
- 55 Magdalino 1984.
- 56 Magdalino 1984, 95.
- 57 Magdalino 1984, 95.
- 58 Magdalino 1984, 95.

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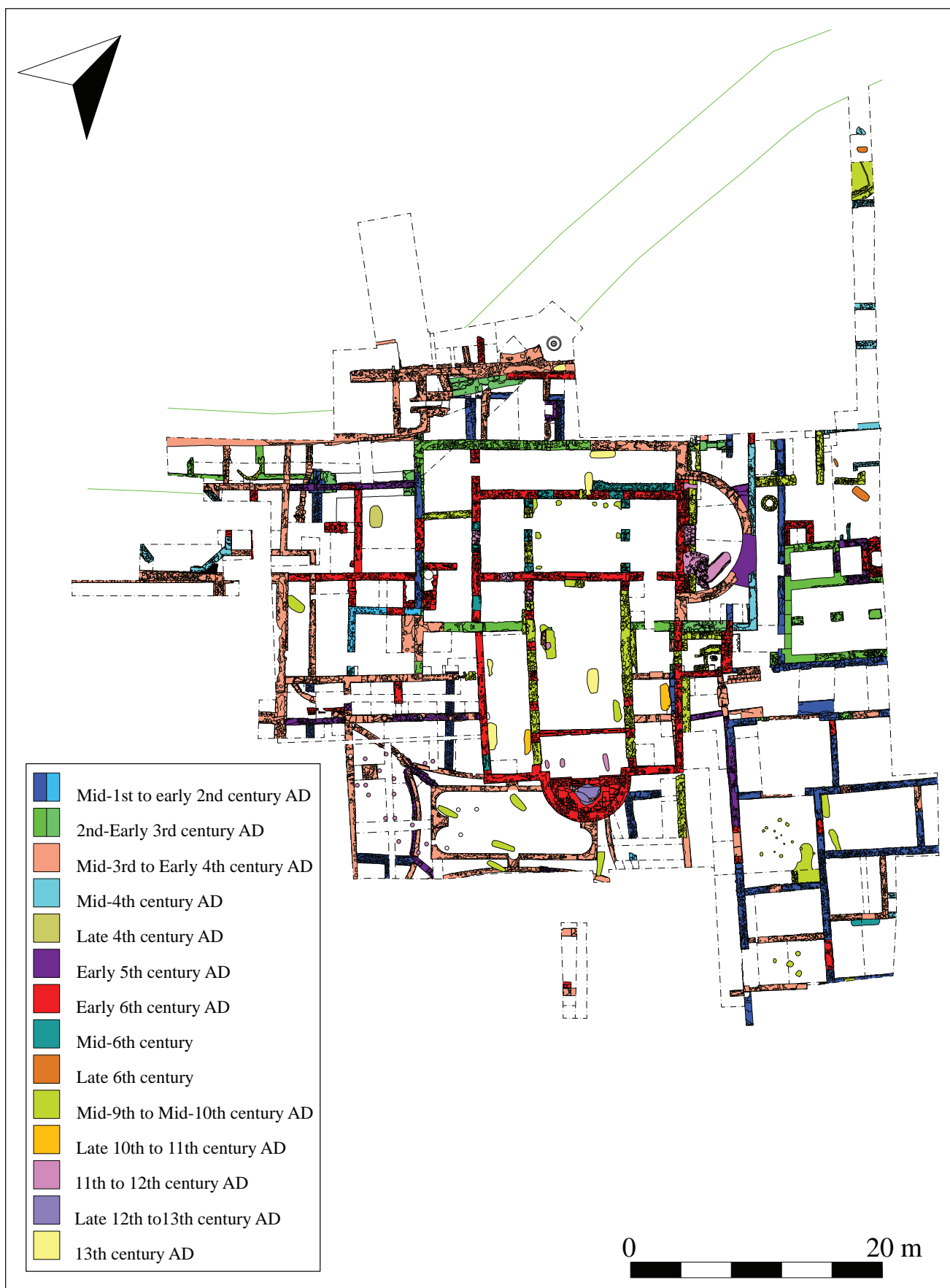


Plate 1.1. Multi-period phase plan of the suburb/domus/basilica/oikos excavations

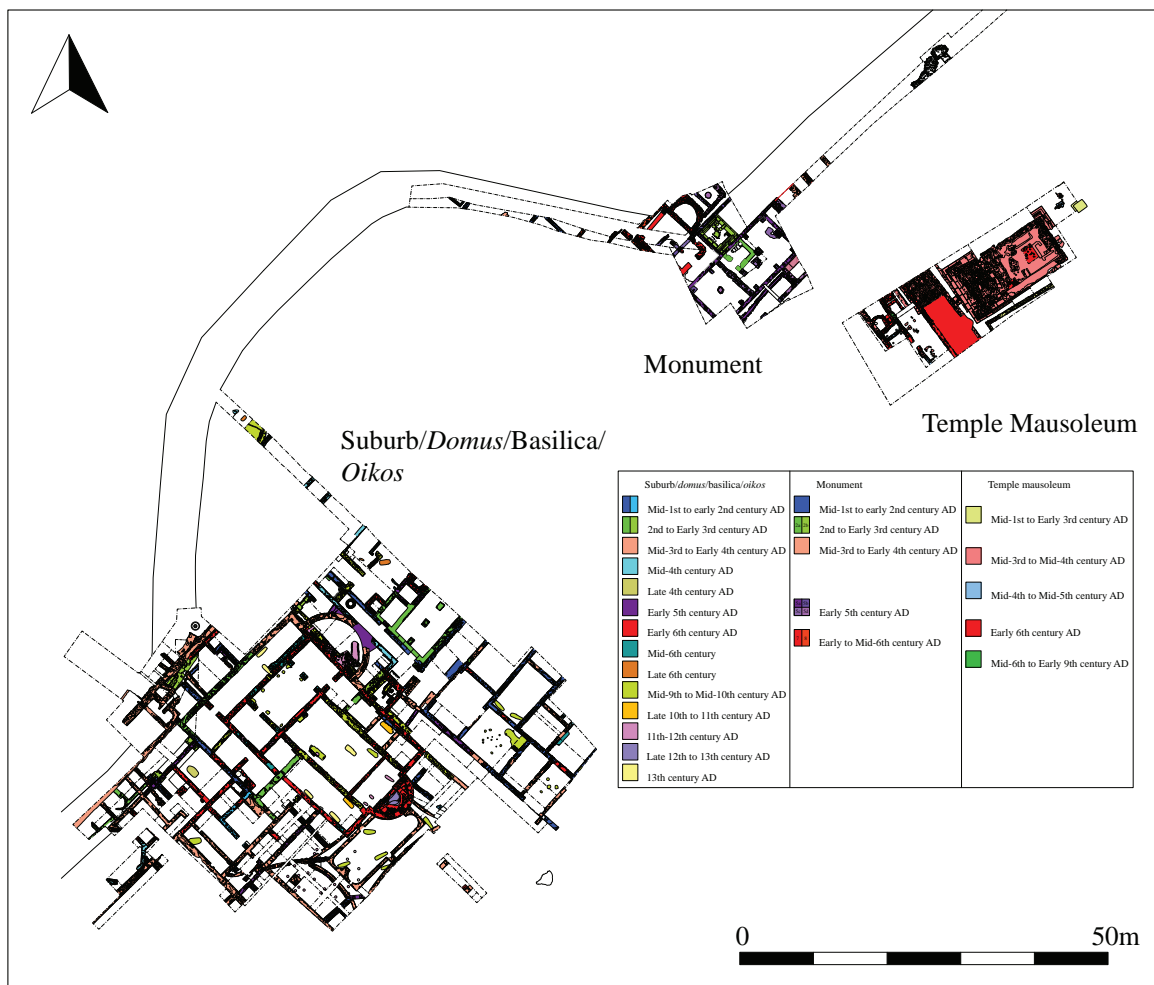


Plate 1.2. Multi-period phase plan of the Vrina Plain excavations

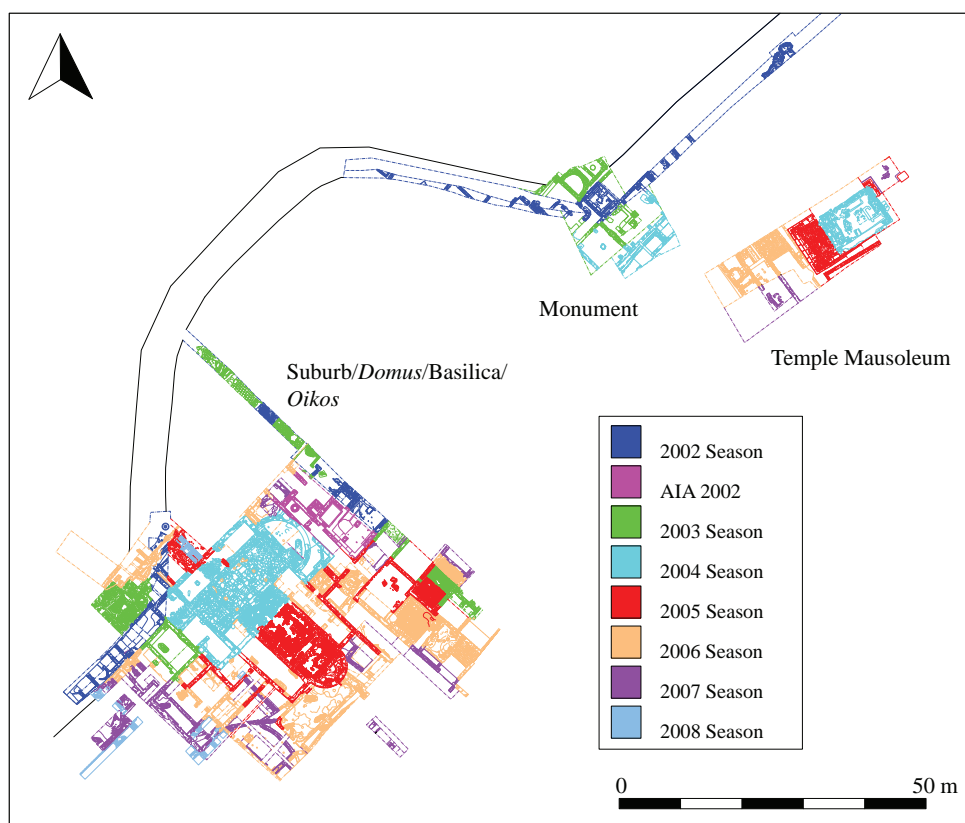


Plate 1.3. Year by year plan of the Vrina Plain excavations

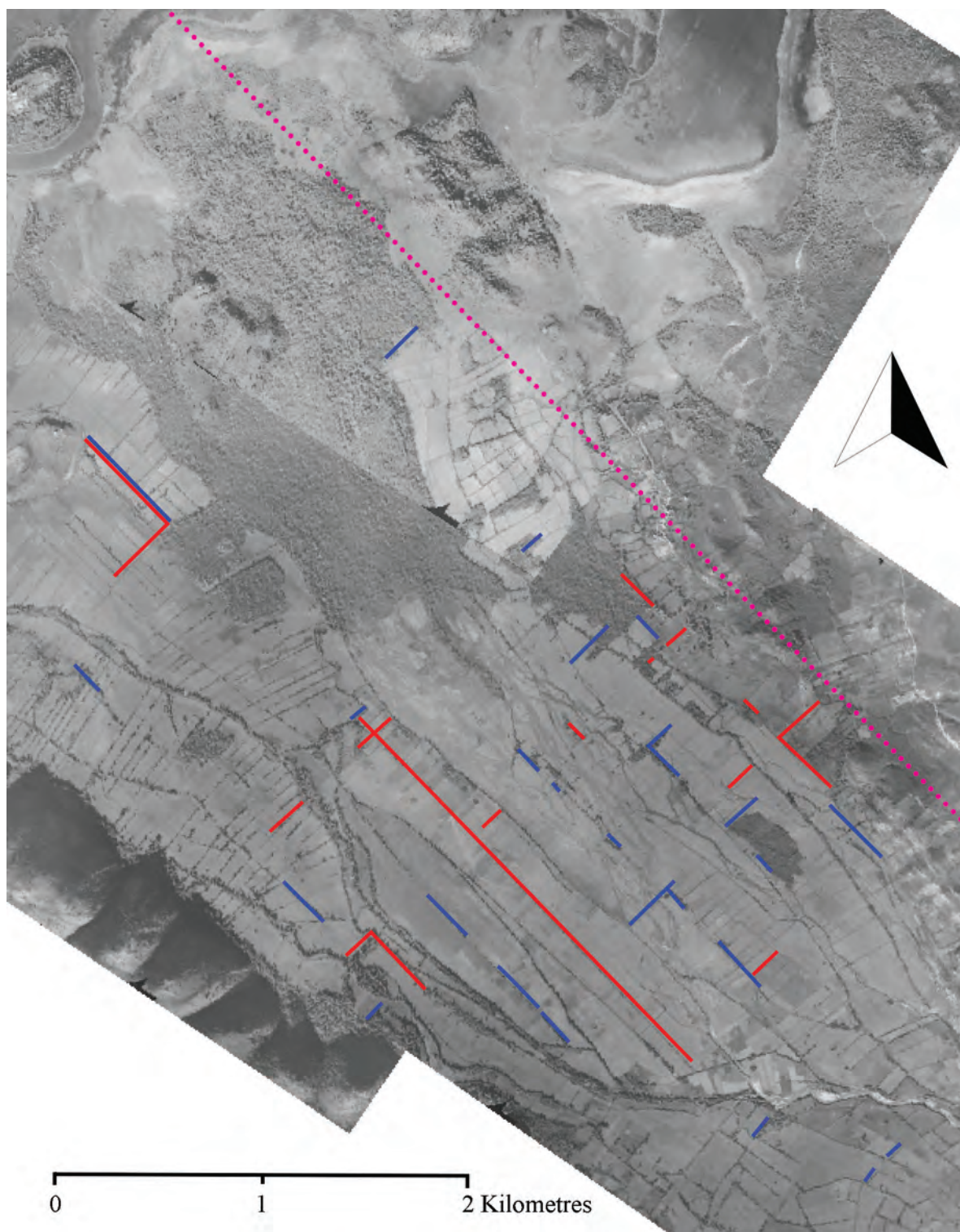


Plate 2.1. Evidence for formal land organisation surviving in aerial photographic imagery from 1943

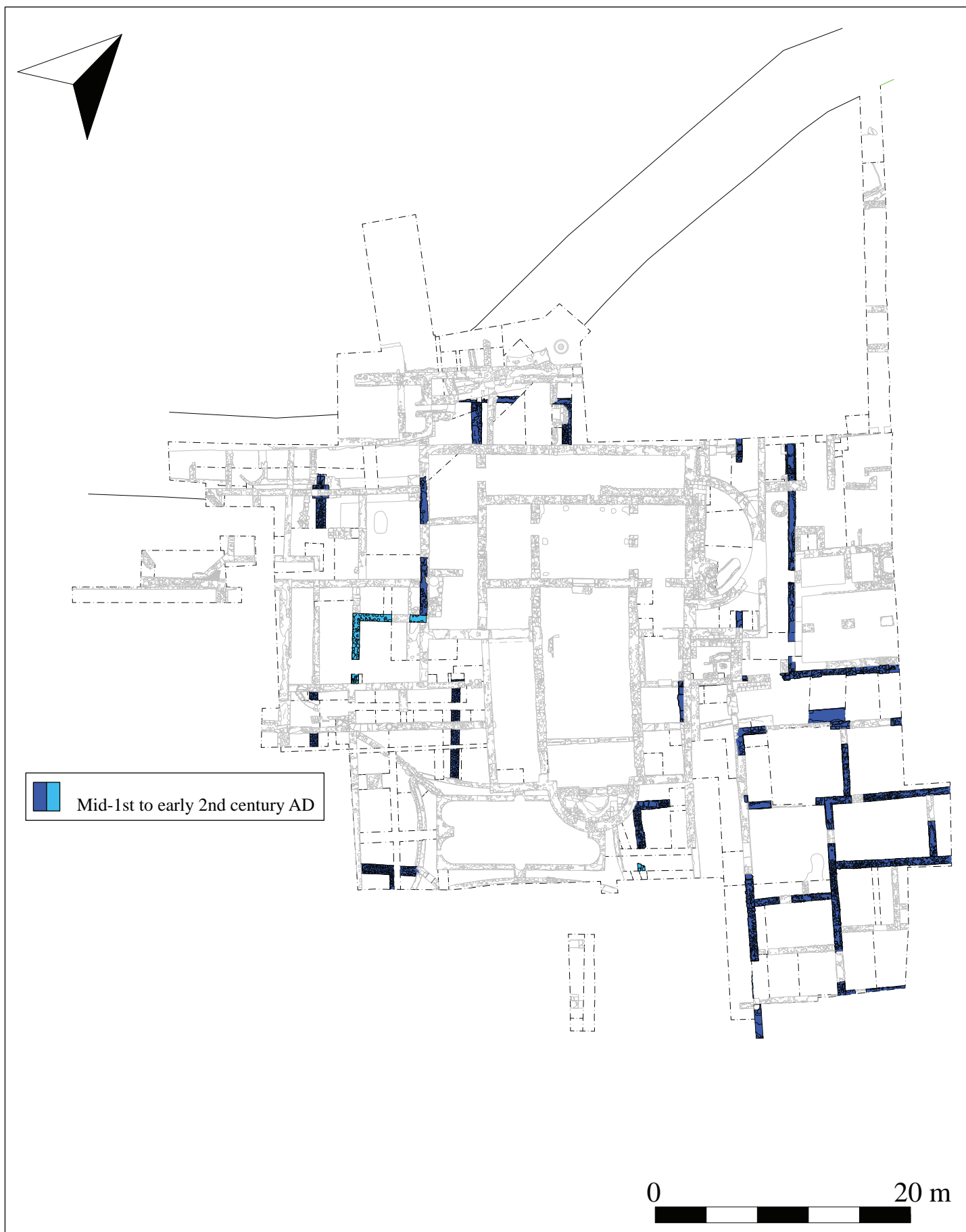


Plate 3.1. The Vrina Plain settlement showing Phase 1 walls (mid-1st to early 2nd century)



Plate 3.2. The Vrina Plain settlement showing Phase 2 walls (2nd to early 3rd century)



Plate 4.1. The Vrina Plain settlement showing Phase 3a and 3b walls (mid-3th to mid-4th century)

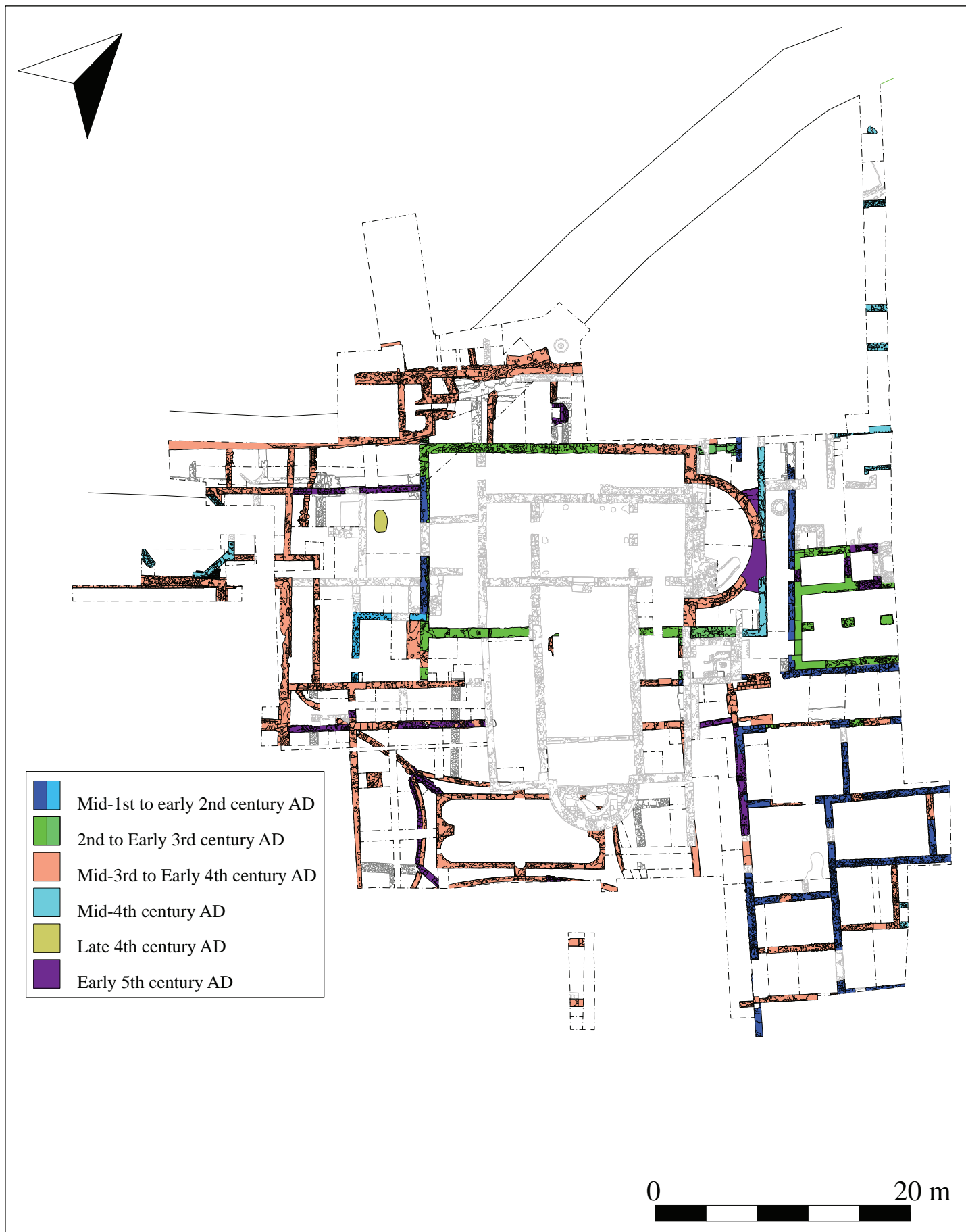


Plate 5.1. The Vrina Plain settlement showing Phase 5 walls (early 5th century)

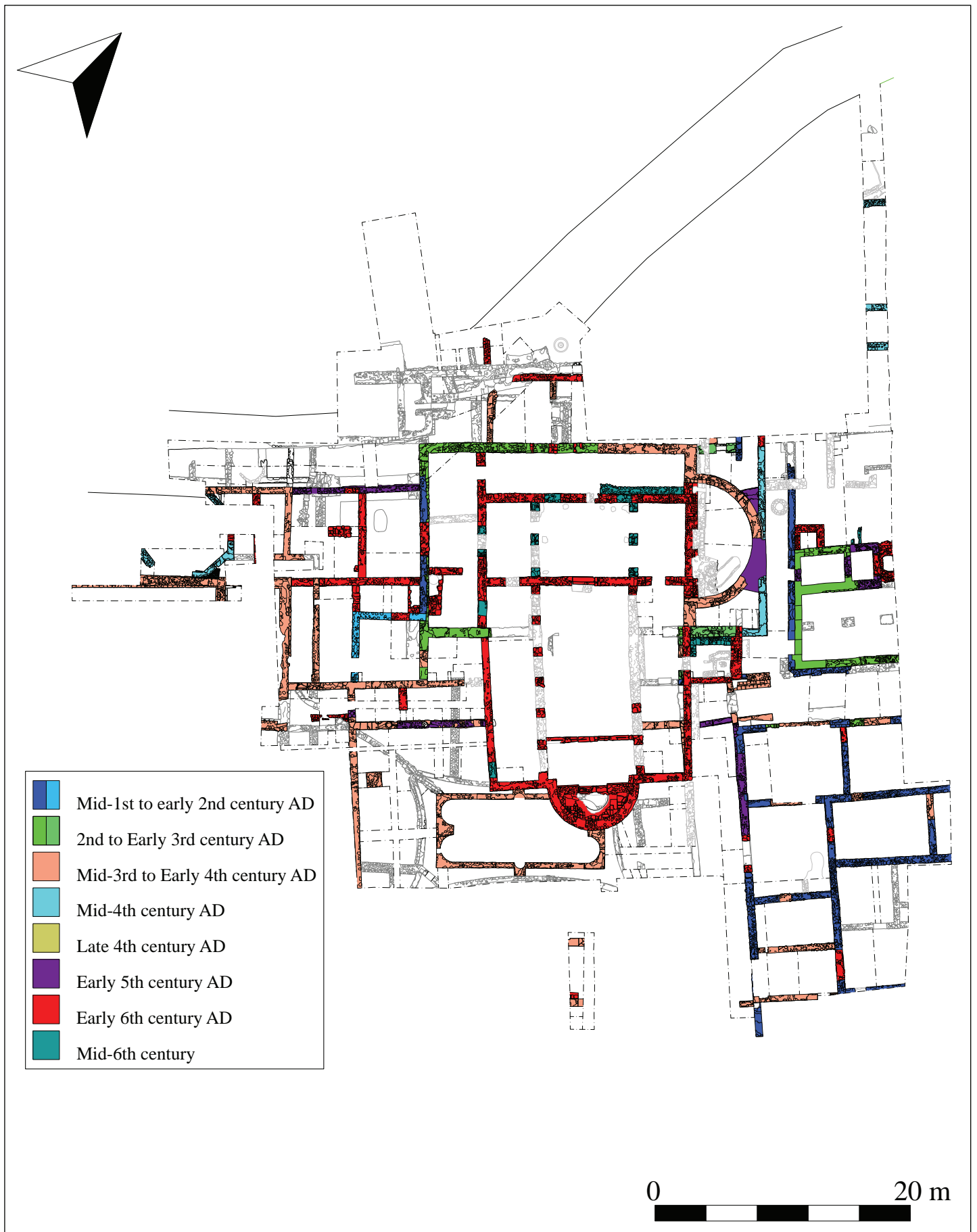


Plate 6.1. The Vrina Plain settlement showing Phase 7 and 8 walls (early to mid-6th century)

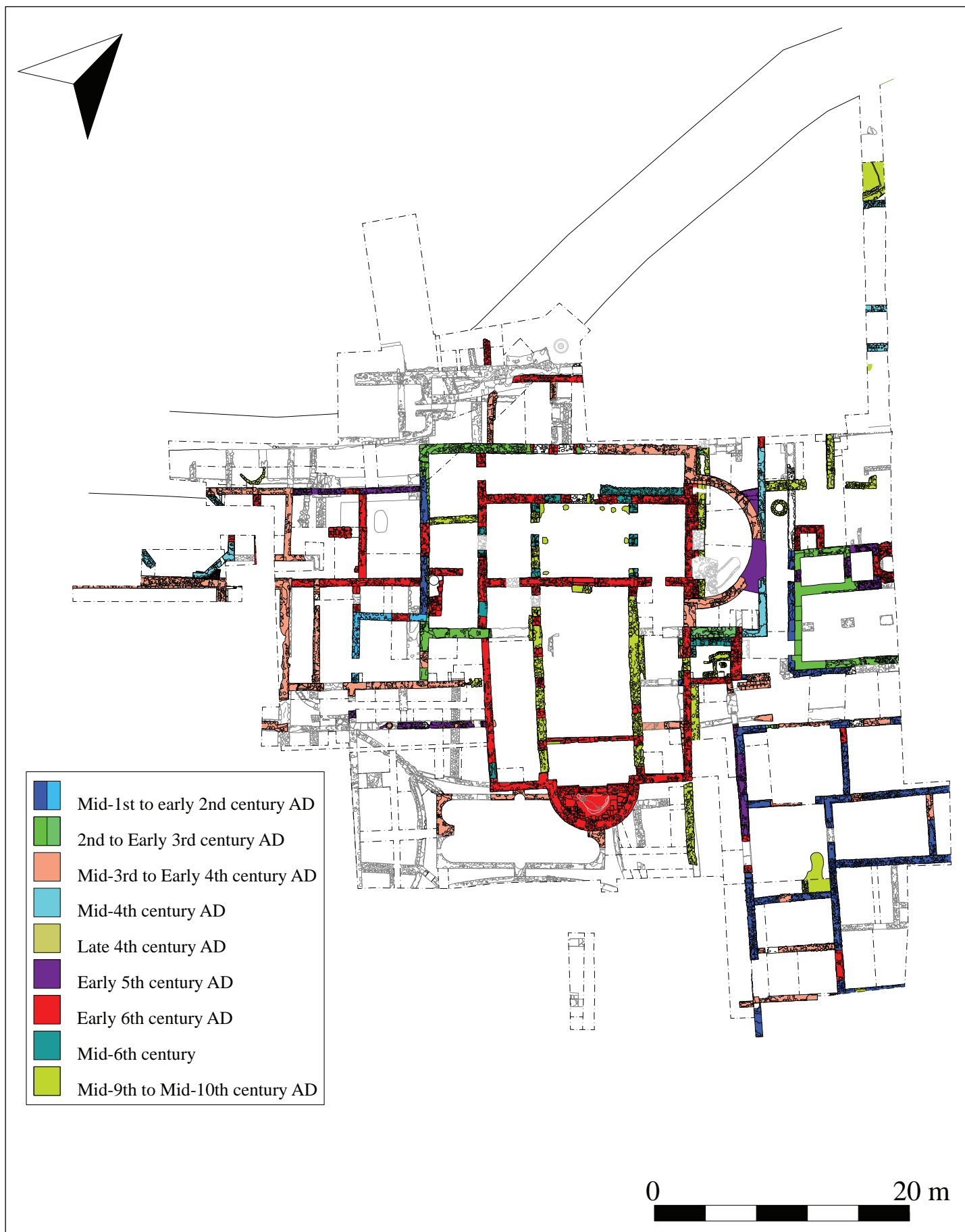


Plate 7.1. The Vrina Plain settlement showing Phase II walls (mid-9th to mid-10th century)



Plate 8.1. The Temple mausoleum complex showing Phases 1–10

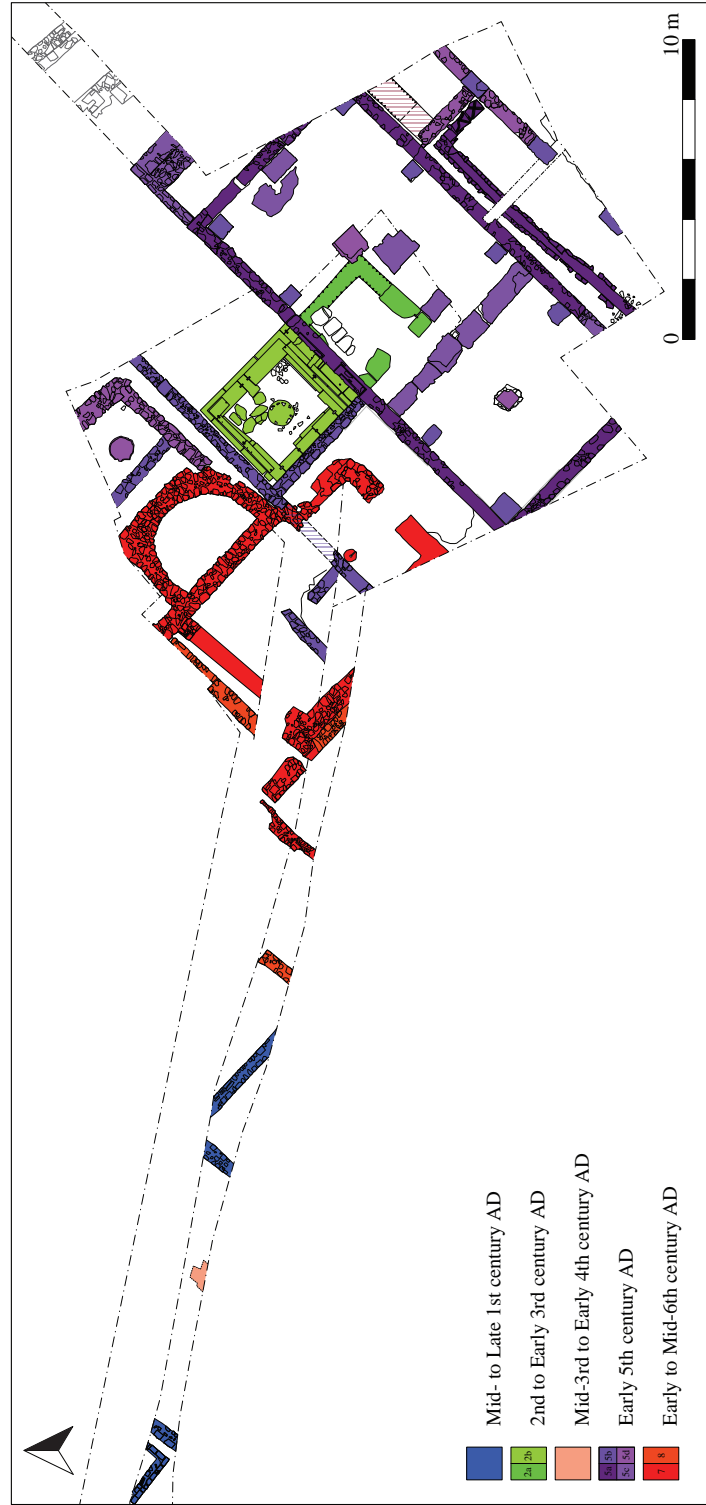


Plate 9.1. The phases of the Monument buildings



Plate 9.2. The phases of the early 5th-century rectangular building



Plate 9.3. The phases of the small chapel in the early to mid-6th century



a



b



c

Plate 10.1. Mosaic pavement (3838) of the eastern portico



Plate 10.2. Mosaic pavement (7306) exposed in the northwest corner of the eastern room of the marine entrance



Plate 10.3. Mosaic pavement in Room 5 (Mosaic 115)



a



b



a



b

Plate 10.4. Detail of mosaic pavement in Room 5 (Mosaic 115)

Plate 10.5. Detail of mosaic pavement in Room 5 (Mosaic 115)



a



b



Plate 10.6. Mosaic pavement in Room 3 (Mosaic 3499)

Plate 10.7. Detail of mosaic pavement in Room 3 (Mosaic 3499)

Plate 10.8. (left) Area of mosaic in the Octagonal Building (Mosaic 7152)



Plate 10.9. (below) Area of mosaic pavement just to the east of the Octagonal Building (Mosaic 3986)



a



b



c



Plate 10.10. Comparison of peltas a. Room 3 Vrina Plain domus; b Room 25 Triconch domus; c. Room 24 Triconch domus



Plate 11.1. The Vrina Plain mosaic



Plate 11.2. The nave mosaic



Plate 11.3. Detail of Rows A–C and the lower inscription

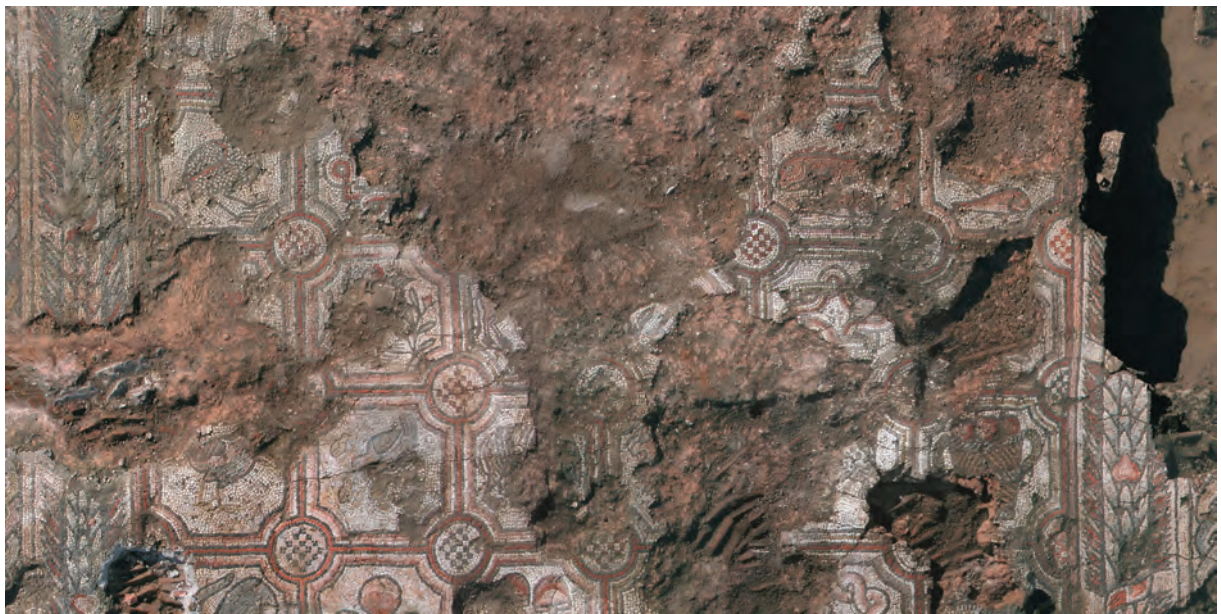


Plate 11.4. Detail of Rows D–F



Plate 11.5. Detail of Rows G–I



Plate 11.6. Detail of Rows J–L



Plate 11.7. Detail of Rows M–O



Plate 11.8. Detail of the borders of the nave mosaic

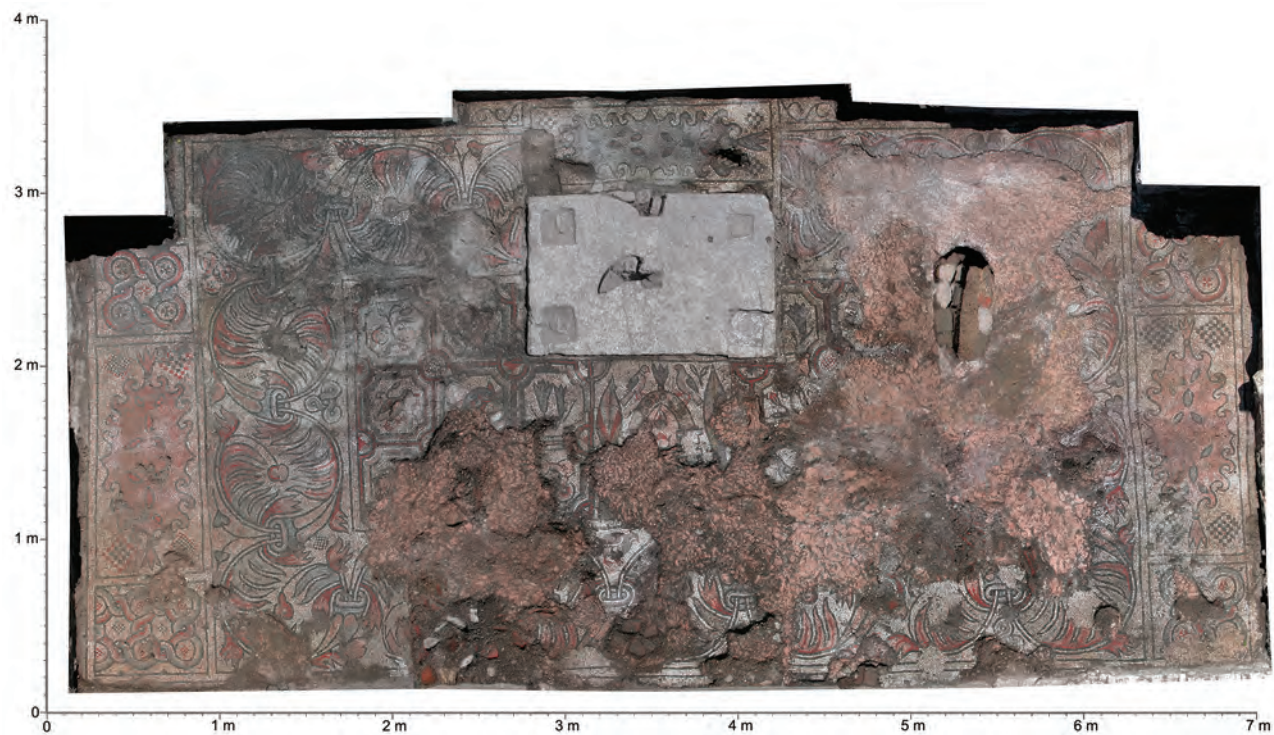


Plate 11.9. The sanctuary mosaic



Panel A1



Panel A3



Panel A4



Panel A6

Plate 11.10. Detail of the surviving panels in Row A



Panel B1



Panel B2



Panel B3



Panel B4

Plate 11.11. Detail of panels 1–4 in Row B



Panel B5



Panel B6

Plate 11.12. Detail of panels 5 and 6 in Row B



Plate 11.13. The lower inscription



Panel C1



Panel C2



Panel C3



Panel C5



Panel C6

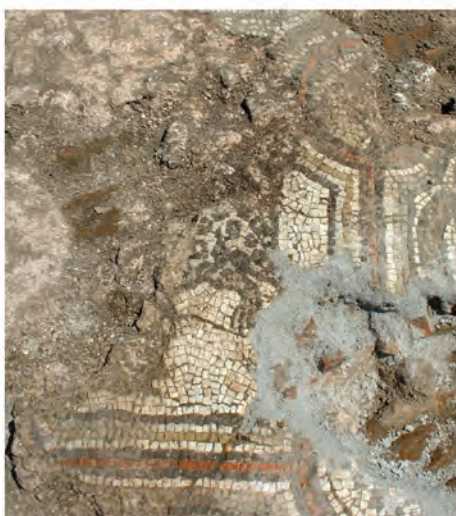
Plate 11.14. Detail of the surviving panels in Row C



Panels D1 and D2



Panels D3 and D4



Panel D5



Panel D6

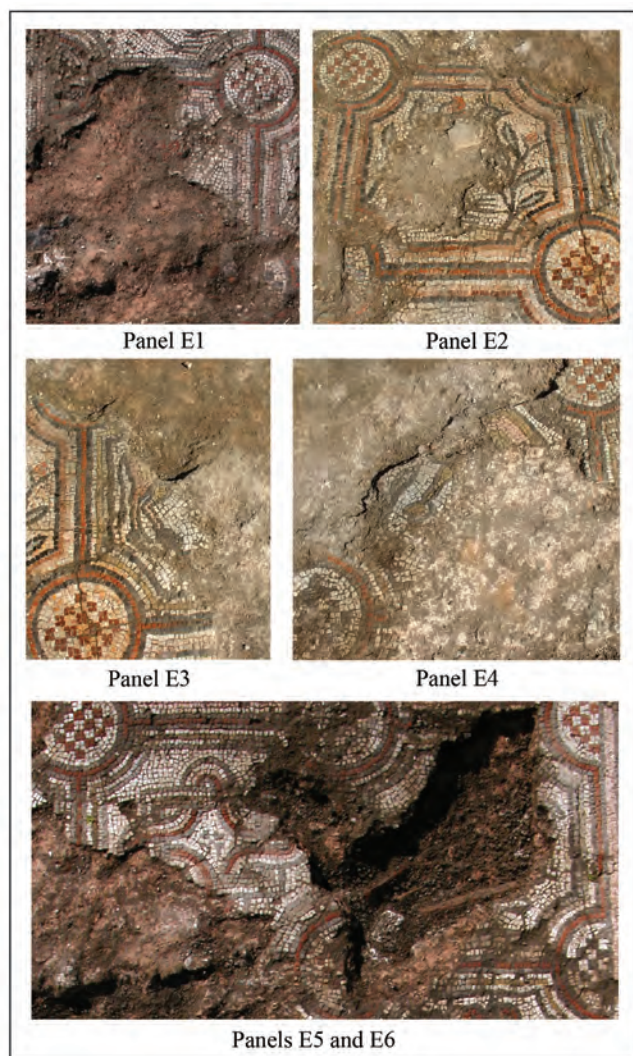


Plate 11.16. Detail of the surviving panels in Row E

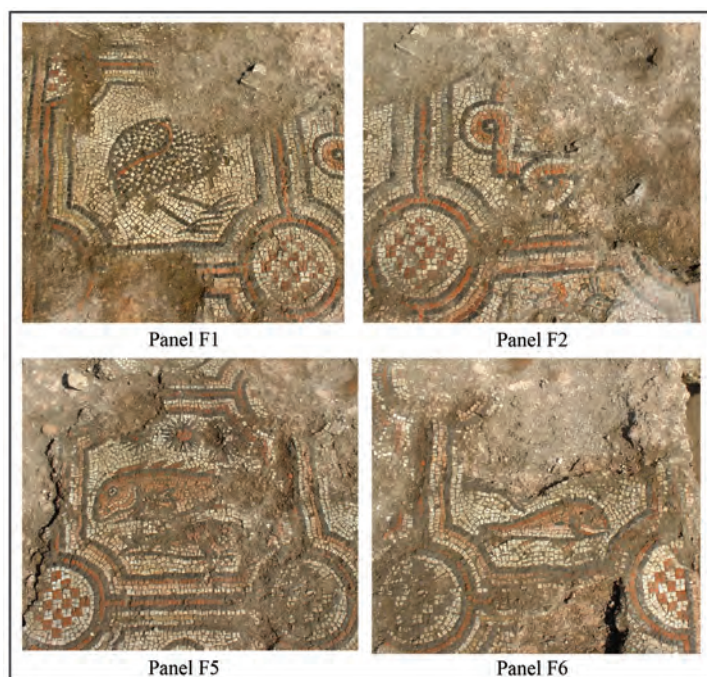


Plate 11.17. Detail of the surviving panels in Row F

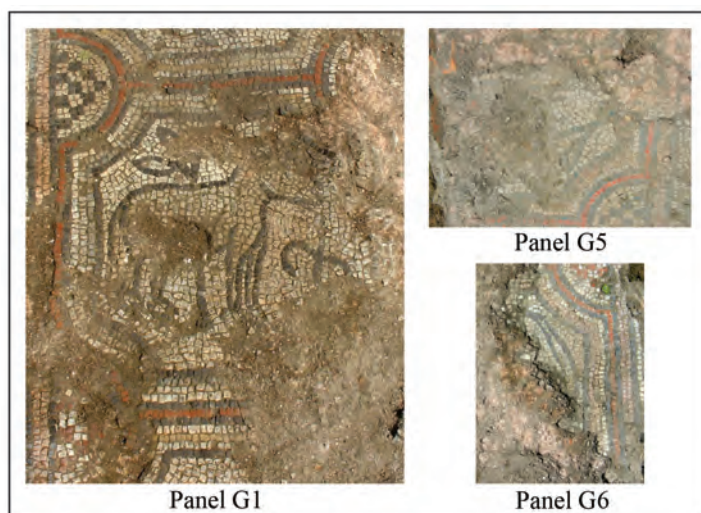


Plate 11.18. Detail of the surviving panels in Row G

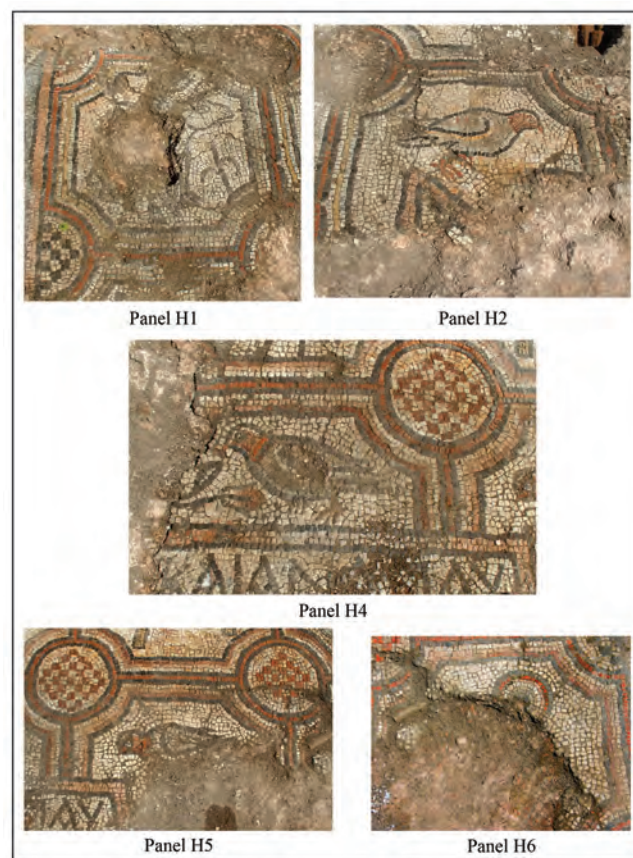


Plate 11.19. Detail of the surviving panels in Row H



Panel I1



Panel I2



Panel I4



Panel I5



Panel I6



Plate 11.21. Detail of the surviving panels in Row J



Plate 11.23. Detail of the surviving panels in Row L

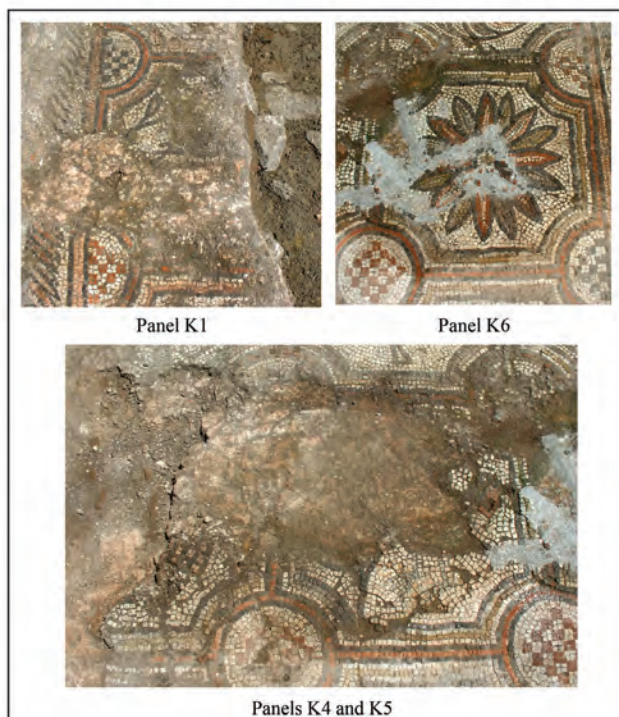


Plate 11.22. Detail of the surviving panels in Row K



Plate 11.24. Detail of the surviving panels in Row M



Panel N1



Panel N2



Panel N3



Panel N4



Panel N5



Panel N6



Panel O1



Panel O2



Panel O3



Panel O4



Panel O5



Panel O6



Plate 11.27. The base of the altar in the sanctuary



Plate 11.28. Detail of the central panel in the sanctuary

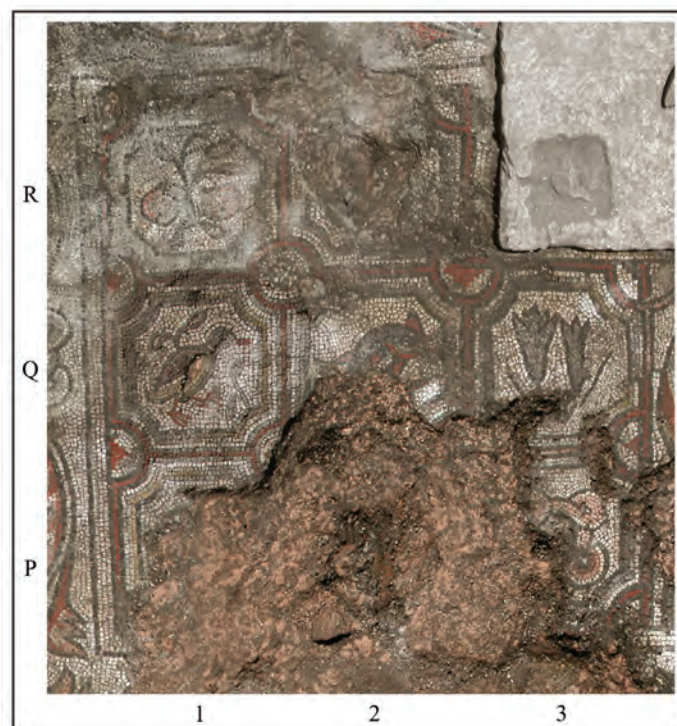


Plate 11.29. Detail of the panels on the left-hand side of the altar



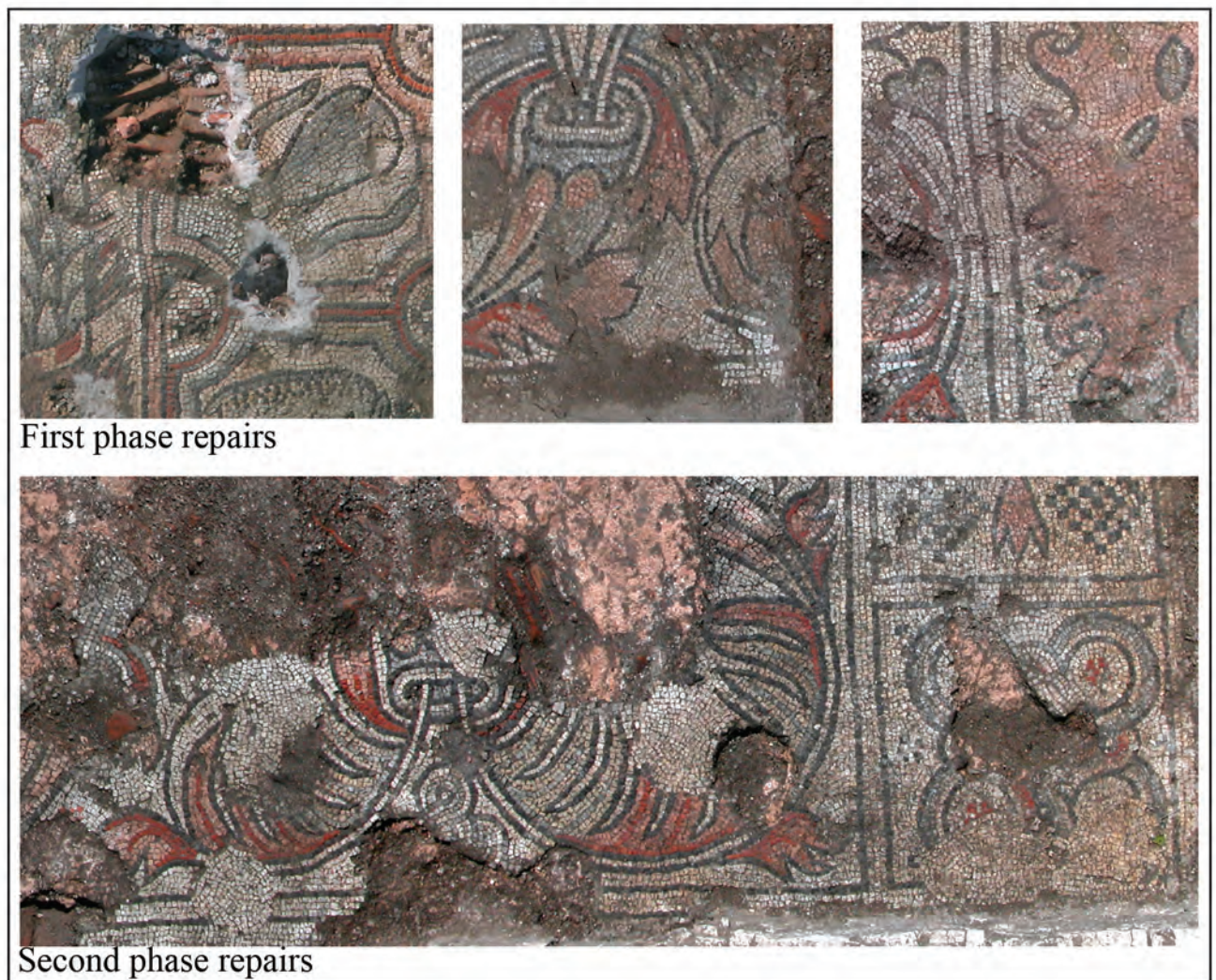
Plate 11.30. Detail of the remaining panels on the right-hand side of the altar



Plate 11.31. Detail of the rinceau border



Plate 11.32. Detail of the outer border in the sanctuary



First phase repairs

Second phase repairs

Plate 11.33. Different repairs made to the nave and sanctuary floors

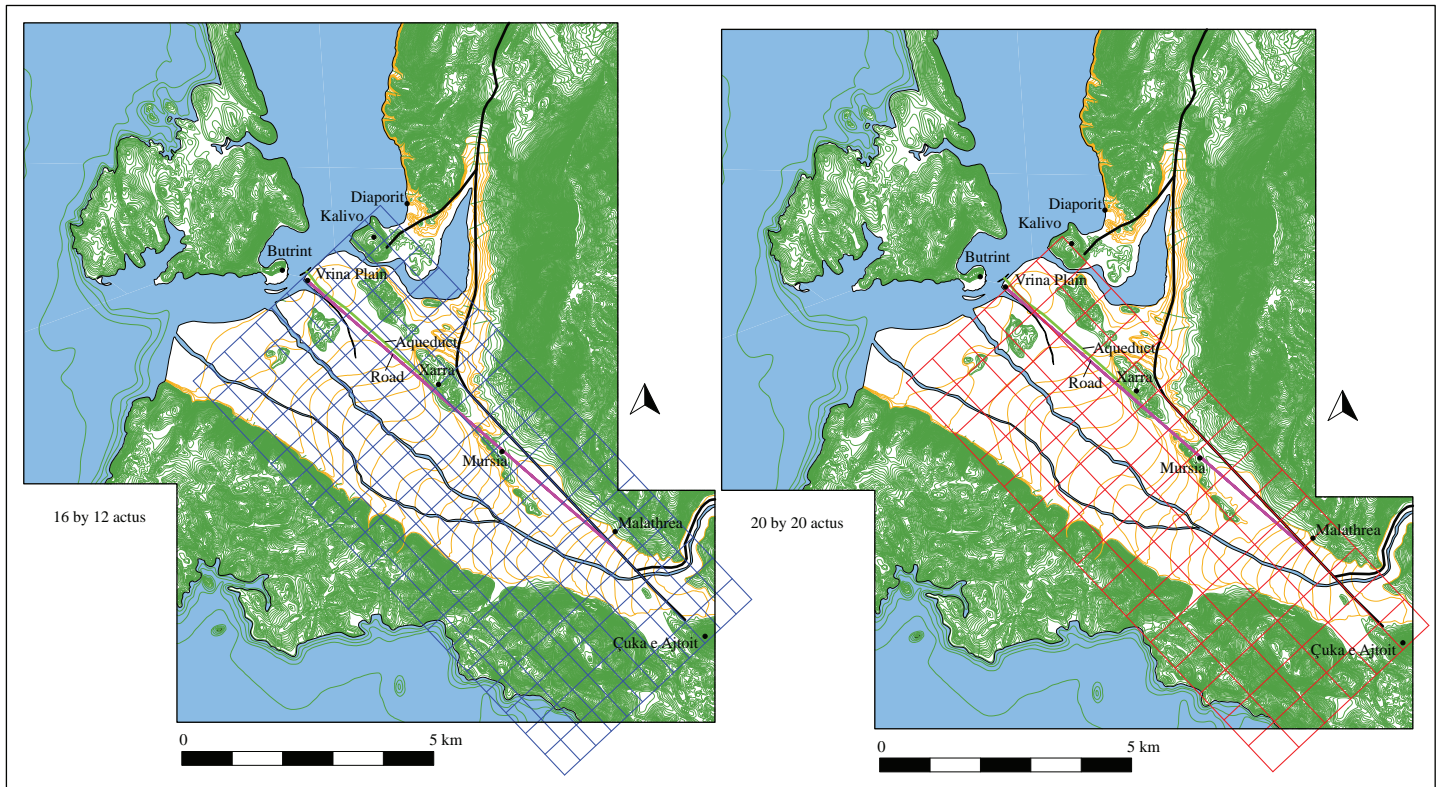


Plate 12.1. Plan of the two possible land division systems in the Pavllas Valley

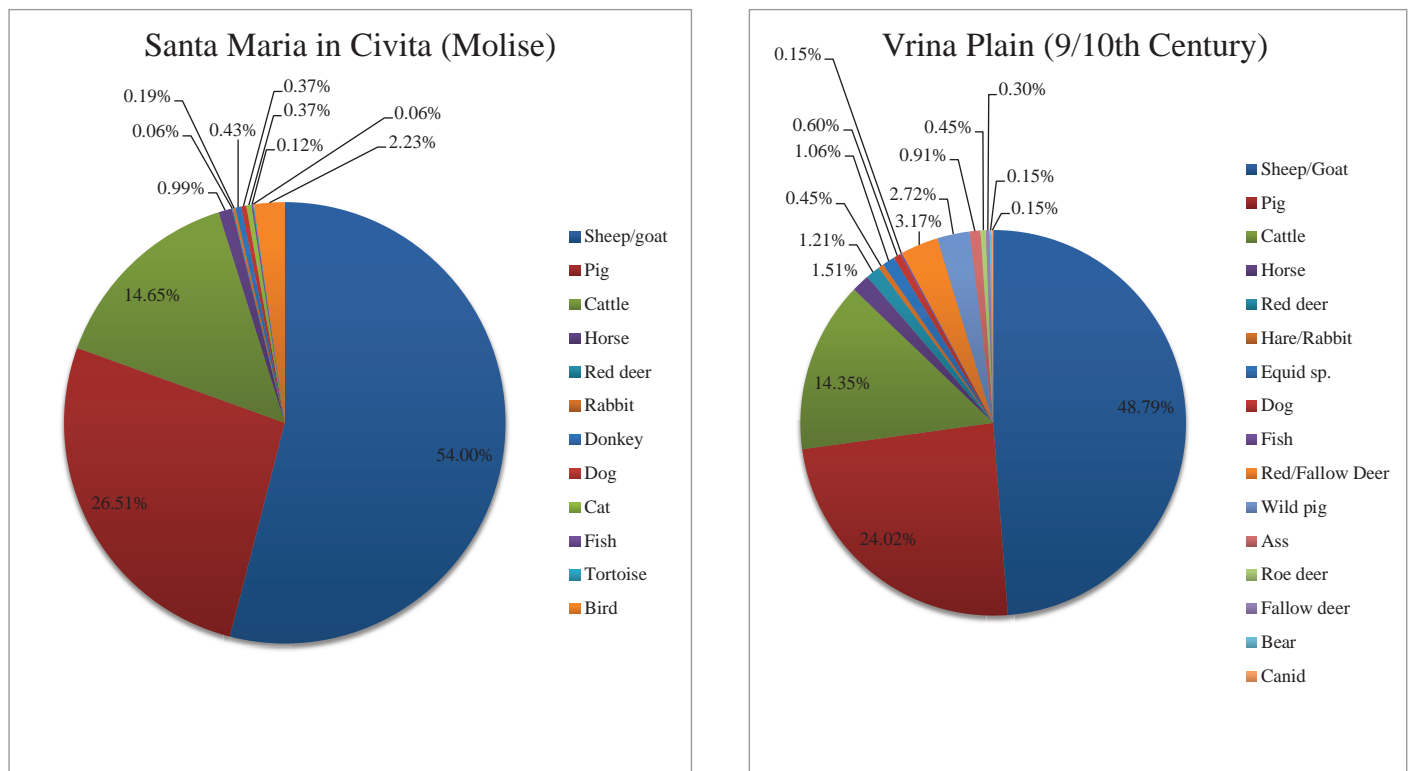


Plate 14.1. The livestock economy of the Vrina Plain 'oikos' compared to Santa Maria in Civita (D85), Molise

BUTRINT 6

EXCAVATIONS ON THE VRINA PLAIN VOLUME 1



Butrint 6 describes the excavations carried out on the Vrina Plain by the Butrint Foundation from 2002–2007. Lying just to the south of the ancient port city of Butrint, these excavations have revealed a 1,300-year-long story of a changing community that began in the 1st century AD, one which played its part not only in shaping the city of Butrint but also in how the city interacted and at times reacted to the changing political, economic and cultural situations occurring across the Mediterranean World over this period.

Volume 1 discusses the results from the excavations, tracing the development of the area from an early Roman bridgehead suburb during the 1st and 2nd centuries AD to a major 3rd-century *domus*, one of the largest of its kind in the province of Epirus Vetus, its transformation into a new residential centre dominated by a Christian basilica in Late Antiquity, to becoming the home of a Byzantine *archon* during the 9th and 10th centuries when it was, in all but name, Butrint, and its subsequent uses following its abandonment due to the rising water table. This is followed by a description of the *domus* mosaics and a detailed examination of the basilica mosaics, analysing the imagery, meaning and context of this intricate and detailed pavement, together with discussions of the Vrina Plain and its place within the story of Butrint and the wider Mediterranean World during the Roman and Byzantine periods.

SIMON GREENSLADE is a freelance archaeologist with over 25 years' experience. He has worked on a wide variety of sites in the UK as well as in Europe, North Africa and the Middle East.

Butrint Archaeological Monograph Series

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